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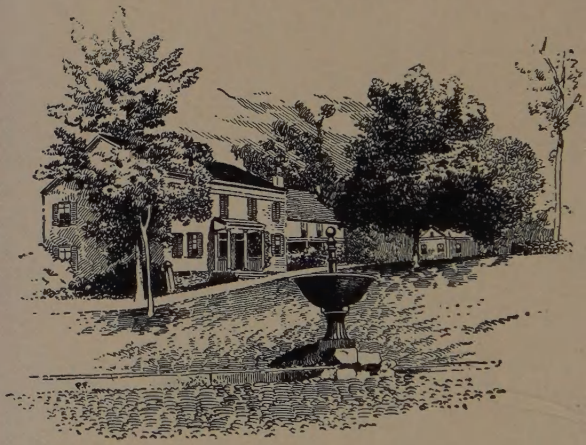
JESSE LEE
WILLIAM H. MEREDITH



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JESSE LEE'S FIRST PREACHING PLACE IN NEW ENGLAND, NORWALK, CONN.

The preacher probably stood on the rising ground back of the roadside drinking fountain

Jesse Lee

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A Methodist Apostle

By

WILLIAM HENRY MEREDITH



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DEDICATED

TO MY
BRETHREN OF THE NEW
ENGLAND CONFERENCE, OF WHICH
JESSE LEE WAS THE FOUNDER, AND IN
WHICH THE GREATER PART OF MY
LIFE HAS BEEN SPENT IN HELP-
ING TO CARRY FORWARD THE
GOOD WORK SO WELL
BEGUN BY JESSE
LEE IN 1789

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FOREWORD

SITTING down to my pleasant task, there lie before me the three chief sources of information concerning the remarkable man and minister of whom I am to write. These are, the very scarce work, by the subject of this biography, A Short History of the Methodists in the United States of America (Baltimore, 1810); Memoir of the Rev. Jesse Lee, with Extracts from His Journals, by Minton Thrift, New York, 1823; and The Life and Times of the Rev. Jesse Lee, by Leroy M. Lee, D.D., his nephew (Charleston, S. C., 1848). Jesse Lee's own very copious manuscript journals were burned in the Methodist Book Room fire in New York in 1836, but not until Thrift had made valuable extracts from them, from which all later writers on Jesse Lee must quote. If Dr. Leroy M. Lee's book of 517 pages, octavo, is too small to set forth the character of such a great man, what can be expected in a booklet like this?

CHAPTER I

A PORTRAIT

As geography and chronology are the eyes of history, so a good steel-engraved or photographed portrait, for a frontispiece, is often a good mirror for a biography. As only a profile of the Rev. Jesse Lee is known to have existed, and that has been lost since 1825, we must therefore be content with a pen picture. Making a composite from his literary artists, we can get a good idea of his appearance in his prime, and that must suffice. Look at him! He will bear looking at. He was a Virginian, a stalwart, more than six feet high, large, weighing over two hundred and fifty pounds, and of a commanding presence. He had a goodly figure, a bluff, hearty, well-rounded, genial face, full, broad, and clean-shaven. His skin was fair, his eyes gray, large, and eloquent. Although he wore the Quaker-like dress of a Methodist preacher, he also wore upon his open, cheerful countenance marks of tenderness, shrewdness, and abounding

good humor. His military bearing he brought with him out of the Revolutionary army, wherein he learned to endure hardness as a good soldier. He had indomitable perseverance, a good flow of spirits, invincible courage, and a great deal of joyous religion. He was a bright, cheerful, yes, a jolly companion, a good singer, and an excellent preacher. He usually had two horses, which, on account of his great weight, he rode in turns.

One who knew him thus describes him as a preacher: "All who knew Mr. Lee will agree that he was peculiarly fitted for the work. He possessed uncommon colloquial powers and a fascinating address, calculated in a high degree to prepossess the mind in his favor. His readiness at repartee was scarcely equaled; and by the skillful use of this talent he often taught those disposed to be witty with him, at his expense, that the safest way to deal with him was to be civil. But what was of more importance, he was fired with a missionary zeal. The truth which had made him free he wished to proclaim to others, and especially to the inquisitive and enterprising descendants of the Pilgrims. He did not doubt but that it would make its way into that land of

priests, and open a wide field for action and usefulness. He was, moreover, a man of great moral courage, and more than ordinary preaching talents. He preached with more ease than any other man I ever knew, and was, I think, the best everyday preacher in the Connection." Thus wrote the Rev. Thomas Ware.

One who heard his first sermon in New England thus describes it: "When he stood up in the open air and began to sing, I knew not what it meant. I drew near, however, to listen, and thought the prayer was the best I had ever heard. He then read his text, and began, in a sententious manner, to address his remarks to the understanding and consciences of the people; and I thought all who were present must be constrained to say, 'It is good for us to be here.' All the while the people were gathering he continued this mode of address, and presented us with such a variety of beautiful images that I thought he must have been at infinite pains to crowd so many pretty things into his memory. But when he entered upon the subject-matter of his text, it was with such an easy, natural flow of expression, and in such a tone of voice, that I could not refrain from weep-

ing; and many others were affected in the same way. When he was done, and we had an opportunity of expressing our views to each other, it was agreed that such a man had not visited New England since the days of Whitefield. I heard him again, and thought I could follow him to the ends of the earth." Mr. Lee was about thirty-one years of age when thus described.

From these pen pictures we conclude that we now come to the brief study of the life and work of no ordinary man and minister when we take up Jesse Lee, the Apostle of Methodism to New England.

CHAPTER II

BIRTH AND BOYHOOD

JESSE LEE, though not high-born and noble, according to the social standards of his times, was well-born. He was a Virginian, born in Prince George County, March 12, 1758. His father and mother, Nathaniel and Elizabeth Lee, were forehanded people, living on their own farm of several hundred acres, "and enough servants to cultivate them." The homestead was about sixteen miles from Petersburg. Both parents had Scripture names. They gave Scripture names to their nine children, Nathaniel, Jesse, Peter, John, Adam, Abraham, Sarah, Rebecca, and Mary. These names signify fondness for the Bible on the part of both parents and grandparents. Jesse's ancestry on both sides is supposed to have been English, and among the early settlers in Virginia. His parents had English as well as Bible ideas concerning the size of families, as seen by their nine children. Jesse thus had the advantages of being one of a large family. "There is

scarcely an instance of any only child achieving greatness," wrote a wide observer, who instanced Napoleon as being one of thirteen children, Franklin one of seventeen, General Sherman one of eleven, Charles Dickens one of eight, Gladstone one of seven, Wendell Phillips one of nine—"A nest of brothers, with three sisters in it," he calls it. Susannah Wesley was one of two dozen, and John and Charles Wesley two of nineteen children.

Jesse Lee was not born into a godless family. His parents were nominal Christians. The Anglican Church was the Church of the state. Into it they doubtless had been baptized, and thereby, according to its teachings, had been made regenerate. Probably each parent had been duly confirmed as a communicant. Their neighborhood was especially favored in having near them the Rev. Devereux Jarratt, a godly man, an evangelical preacher, a faithful pastor, and, when the Methodists first appeared, a zealous helper in their evangelistic work. He continued so until Methodism ceased to be an annex to the Anglican Church, of which he was a priest. When the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized, at the famous Christmas Con-

ference of 1784, Mr. Jarratt entirely left the Methodists. Bath, his parish, of which Sappony Church was the head, was about twelve miles from the Lee home. Bristol parish church was about fifteen miles away in another direction. The Lee family, including the older children, constantly attended church. Jones Hole Church was only a few miles away, and though the rector "was but a sorry preacher, and of very questionable character," this seems to have been their church home. But Mr. Jarratt also preached throughout that region. Under his preaching Jesse Lee's father became converted. Jesse writes of this: "In the latter part of the year 1772 my father became much more serious, and more engaged with God than formerly. One day when his conviction was deep and his distress very great, he went into the woods, and continued traveling about, and mourning for his sins, till at length he claimed the promise of God, and by faith 'beheld the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,' and was 'justified freely by the blood of Jesus Christ.' The joy he felt in his soul he could not describe with words. He had an evidence that his sins were forgiven, and

that he was born again. This was the beginning of religion in the family; and my father's conversation about religion from that time astonished all."

Jesse was then fourteen years of age. His father's conversion meant much for himself and for the whole family. His mother was brought to tears and repentance by her husband's testimony. She was a seeker for months, but one day while reading the New Testament the Lord spoke peace to her soul. Father and mother now both labored for the conversion of their children. The Lee home became decidedly Christian. One of the first questions settled in that now Christian home seems to have been the amusement question. Jesse Lee writes of it: "When I was a little turned fourteen years of age my father refused to go to any place of amusement, and withal told his children they had better go no more. I thought, at times, that it was hard to be kept under such restrictions, inasmuch as I saw that other young people could go without being restrained; but it was not long before my father let us know that it was from religious motives he was led to act as he did. From that time I felt willing to forego the

vain amusements of life, and to conform to my father's will." Note that this was not then a Methodist home. The chief amusements referred to were probably the dance, cards, and the play. We admire the spirit in which this father dealt with his children on this question. He did not dictatorially forbid them, but gave them his reasons, and told them they "had better go no more." Bishop Vincent's little book on this subject, Better Not, had not then been written, but Nathaniel Lee's practice chords with its method and spirit.

Among Jesse's boyhood companions were some wicked young people; probably there was but little choice for him. As moral standards there were low, Christian young people would be but few. As to how he lived among the young people of his boyhood he shall speak for himself: "I do not recollect that I ever swore in my life, except one night, being in company with some wicked young people, I uttered some kind of oaths, for which I felt ashamed and sorry all the next day, and when alone I felt that God was displeased with me for my bad conduct. I believe I never did anything in my youth that the people generally called wicked. I used, however, to indulge

bad tempers, and use vain words." This gives us a moral photograph of the boy of fourteen years, whose father had begun to eschew worldly amusements.

His boyhood education must have been very meager. Not a high school, nor an academy, was near there for him to attend. Low as then were the standards of the college at Williamsburg, "William and Mary," the second oldest in America, being next in age to Harvard, they were above the attainments of the average boy of the period. The Rev. Devereux Jarratt says that when he was thirteen years old all he had been able to learn from his several teachers in the school in his neighborhood was to be able to indifferently read the Bible, "write a sorry scrawl, and acquire some knowledge of arithmetic. With this small fund I left school." At nineteen years of age he began to teach. "I was so skilled in the Division of Crops, the Rule of Three, and Practice, that you may be sure that the fame of my learning sounded far." The schools had not greatly improved when, fifteen years later, the boy Jesse Lee began to attend them.

The Bible was then in the public schools, such as they were. In Virginia, where the

Anglican was the state Church, the Book of Common Prayer also was one of the text-books. Each scholar was taught the catechism found in the prayer book. On Wednesdays and Fridays, the church services were used in the schools. As soon as he could use it each child was expected to own a prayer book and carry it to church and there use it on Sundays. Jesse Lee did this, and won favor by the devout and intelligent part he took in the Sunday services. This training in Bible and prayer book reading, and catechism learning, was of very great benefit to him in after years. In his boyhood he was often restrained from sinning by remembering his catechism.

Instrumental music was then largely confined to the fiddle, the fife, and the drum, but the singing teacher was abroad in the land. To singing school went Jesse Lee. Sacred music was taught. The teachers concluded that the young people would learn the songs of the day without urging, and so sought to preëmpt their minds with hymns and hymn tunes. Jesse Lee loved to sing, and as he could do it well the people liked to hear him. This branch of his meager early education was of great value to him and to the Church in his lifework

as a preacher of the gospel. David's early training as a shepherd boy, and as a musician, helped to fit him for kingship, and for a psalmist. The Virginia farmer's boy of fourteen years had been in training for a work of which he never then had dreamed. What he lacked in book learning was compensated for by his contact with living people. He learned much of human nature in the rough and tumble of the Virginia farm life of those days. At about fifteen years of age he impresses us as being a good and clean farmer boy, wide-awake, cheerfully disposed, with promise of becoming more than an ordinary man.

CHAPTER III

A LAD'S CONVERSION

A TRULY Christian home is the most favorable place for the children born into it to secure the second, spiritual birth. Jesse Lee's home, always nominally Christian, had now become really and experimentally Christian. Christ, and personal salvation through him, was a frequent topic of conversation in that home. The father and mother, enjoying religion, spoke often one to another on the subject. When their kindred and other guests came the subject of religion found a place in the conversation. Doubtless the children were at times personally appealed to on the subject. It was not served up at breakfast, dinner, supper, and as lunches between. These wise parents did not by nagging their children sicken them of the theme, as perhaps some Christian parents unwittingly do. The atmosphere of the Lee home was not vitiated in that way, but was sweetened by spontaneous Christian conversation and testimony.

One day Jesse heard his father, in talk-

ing to a pious relative, say: "If a man's sins were forgiven him he would *know* it." Though not intended for him, these words "took hold of his mind, and he pondered them in his heart." They were "as a nail in a sure place"; "they kept running across my mind." He asked himself, "Are my sins forgiven?" The painful answer was, "No." His conviction of sin deepened and continued. For four weeks never for an hour did he lose sight of his lost condition. His constant cry was, "How shall I escape the misery of hell?" He would hide among the bushes and pray for forgiveness of his sins. He often wept bitter tears of genuine repentance. Sometimes he thought, "Your day of grace is past, and God will never forgive your sins."

The tempter seems to have made desperate efforts to hinder the conversion of this boy of about fifteen years of age. Did he see the possibilities in him for the kingdom of light? The boy had literally to *agonize* in order to enter the strait gate which would admit him to the narrow way. He tells us how he entered: "One morning, being in deep distress, and fearing every moment that I should drop into hell, and viewing myself as hanging

over the pit, I was constrained to cry in earnest for mercy, and the Lord came to my relief, and delivered my soul from the burden and guilt of sin. My whole frame was in tremor from head to foot, and my soul enjoyed sweet peace. The pleasure I then felt was indescribable. This happiness lasted about three days, during which time I never spoke to any person about my feelings. I anxiously wished for some one to talk to me on the subject, but no one did." His reticence caused him to lose his great peace, and to walk in comparative darkness for about six months. He did not then know the duty, privilege, and power of Christian testimony. A religious neighbor was the means of leading him again into the light. He asked him, "Were you ever converted?" The conversation which followed this question led him again to rejoice in the conscious favor of God through Jesus Christ, and emboldened him to testify to the fact of God's power on earth to forgive sins, for the sake of the sinner's Saviour.

Doubtless Jesse Lee afterward thought these hard conversion experiences were best suited to fit him for his arduous and strenuous gospel ministry; but we never

find him setting his experience up as a standard for others. He knew that Lydia's sudden and undemonstrative conversion was just as thorough and genuine as that of her fellow townsman, the Philippian jailer. Many devout Christians who were born into Christian homes, and there received true Christian nurture, like the writer, cannot tell when and where they were converted. Such understand the reply of a little boy to a zealous evangelist who asked him, "Have you found Jesus?" "I never lost him, sir." By practicing the doctrine and discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church as never before, large numbers of her children are being saved from lapsing into willful transgressions. Many adult converts cannot tell exactly when and where their new life began. That they now are spiritually alive, whereas once they were spiritually dead, they *know*. The varieties of conversion experiences recorded in the New Testament make interesting reading.

Neither Jesse Lee nor his parents were converted under the Methodists. As yet they had not come into these parts. Mr. Jarratt's ministry in that section was the means of their conversion. In 1770 and

1771 a great revival swept over Jarratt's parish, and overflowed into regions beyond. He held meetings in private houses, and informally taught and preached to the people, a rare thing for a priest of the Anglican Church of those days to do. He was persecuted by his priest brothers for working in this way, which they claimed was contrary to the canons of the Church. He held meetings much like class meetings. Perhaps he had heard of them in London, England, where he went to be ordained in 1763. When he began his work the parishes in Virginia usually numbered eight or nine communicants each. In ten years of Jarratt's labor the number in his parish had risen to "nine hundred or one thousand. A great part of these, I trust, were gracious souls, and such as were truly in earnest to work out their salvation." He says that when he began his evangelistic work he knew no other priest of his Church like-minded with himself. "I stood alone for some considerable time, and I dare say no man was ever more cordially abhorred than I was by the clergy in general." Later he found one, the Rev. Mr. McRobert, whom he helped to bring out, and whose zeal later led him to leave the Anglican

Church for a wider field in the Presbyterian Church. But Mr. Jarratt remained to the last a loyal and zealous Anglican. He later chose rather to part with the Methodists than with the Established Church. The Lee home up to this date was an Anglican Christian home of the evangelical sort. Had all the state Church priests been like Mr. Jarratt and Mr. McRobert, the Methodists would not have been so much needed in Virginia. Wesley's marching orders to his preachers were, "Go not to those who need you, but to those who need you most."

CHAPTER IV

THE METHODISTS COME ALONG

In 1739 the Revs. George Whitefield, John and Charles Wesley, Oxford Methodists and Anglican clergymen, began their work among the masses of England. Bristol, London, and Newcastle-on-Tyne soon became the head centers of the Wesleys, and London the head center for Whitefield, after he had parted company with the Wesleys for doctrinal reasons. Wesley labored successfully in Ireland. In 1760 there were many Methodist societies in England, Wales, and Ireland. These were societies merely, and not a church. Very many of the members were, like the Wesleys, of the Church of England. The Methodists, though not connected in any way, were held by the Wesleys as a sort of annex to the Church of England.

In 1760 Irish Methodist immigrants landed in New York, but not until 1766 did they begin Methodist meetings. Barbara Heck it was who called them to duty, and commanded a local preacher, Philip Em-

bury, to preach in his own house; which, of course, he did. About the same time an Irish Methodist local preacher, Robert Strawbridge, began Methodist meetings in Maryland. The New Yorkers were reinforced by a local preacher and British soldier, Lieutenant Thomas Webb, then of Albany barracks. He became the chief founder of American Methodism. Soon Wesley Chapel was built on John Street, New York, and Lieutenant Webb wrote to Wesley in England to send over preachers. In 1769 the first missionaries, Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor, were appointed at the Conference. Before they started, Robert Williams, of the Irish Conference, begged Wesley to let him go. Wesley consented to his going, on the self-supporting plan, if he would work under the missionaries appointed at the Conference. He consented, and set out for New York. Driven by storm into Norfolk, Virginia, he decided to go no further by ship, but overland to New York. In Norfolk he saw an empty house, the steps of which he thought would do for a pulpit. He mounted them, and began his first service in America. His was the first sermon preached by a traveling Methodist preacher

on this continent. He was not a local preacher, as some histories say. He was penniless that day, and at the close of his service he begged a night's lodging. A ship captain's wife took him to her home. At the family altar he prayed for the captain at sea, that he might there and then become converted. God answered his prayer, for, on his return, by comparing time, it was found that the answer came while his unknown guest was praying for him in his home.

Robert Williams went on to New York and labored until the missionaries arrived. He then worked under them, according to his promise to Wesley. He was a very remarkable man. He published the first Wesley book in this country. He was the first itinerant to marry, the first to locate, and, after much pioneering, he was the first to die. In 1772-74, Williams pioneered in Virginia. In 1774 he formed the Brunswick Circuit. His preaching and that of his associates appealed to Mr. Jarratt and won his hearty support. Jarratt's parishioners hailed with joy the new pioneers and evangelistic preachers. Jesse Lee's parents soon joined the Methodist society, as did Jesse and his brother. Soon his

father opened his house for preaching services, which were held therein for about forty-six years, when Mr. Lee died, in his ninetieth year. He had been married three times, had twelve children, and at his death he left seventy-three grandchildren and sixty-six great-grandchildren. He had been a Christian for forty-eight years, for nearly all of which time he had been a class leader. With long life God satisfied the father of Jesse Lee, and showed him his salvation.

Jesse Lee was about sixteen years of age when in the spring of 1774 he joined one of Williams's newly formed Methodist societies, which met in his father's house. Under the preaching of Williams he soon felt his need of a deeper work of grace. Sanctification was preached, he searched the Scriptures on the subject, and he sought and found what his soul needed, the perfect love which casteth out fear. He records his experience at the close of this year, 1774, in these words: "In the latter part of the year we had a great revival of religion in our neighborhood, and many of my friends and acquaintances were brought to experience the favor of God. I felt greatly quickened and comforted with the Divine Presence.

I had little inclination to be in any other company but the religious. I was always glad to go to meeting, by night or by day, and sometimes went on foot many miles, and thought myself highly favored in that respect."

The coming of the Methodists into their neighborhood resulted in good things for the Lee family, and in great things to be accomplished by this boy recruit into the Methodist ranks.

Robert Williams is rightly styled the Methodist Apostle of Virginia. He did not know that the boy Jesse Lee, whom he received into his society on the newly formed Brunswick Circuit early in 1774, would become the Apostle of Methodism in New England. Pilmoor, one of the first missionaries, labored in Virginia and in that section in 1772 and 1773. He was there prospecting. He was reinforced in the fall of 1772 by William Watters and Robert Williams, who made Norfolk their center, while Pilmoor went to regions beyond, to eastern Virginia, North Carolina, Charleston, and as far as Savannah, where he visited Whitefield's orphanage, begun by him in 1740. The spring of 1773 found Pilmoor back in Norfolk.

Very much credit is due the Rev. Mr. Jarratt for his work in his own and adjoining parishes. Before the Methodists came along he preached the saving gospel to the people, and did the work of an evangelist. Converts under his ministry were many, including the Lees. When the Methodist preachers came into the field he gladly welcomed them. He took Robert Williams into his home for the first week. When Methodist societies were organized, he met classes in them, and was in full sympathy with the whole Methodist work and workers. He remained so until the societies became the Methodist Episcopal Church, when he wholly withdrew, and even became unfriendly to the Methodists. From his labors came the conversion of Jesse Lee. To Robert Williams it was given to be the means of deepening his spiritual life and to receive him into the Methodist society in 1774.

CHAPTER V

A YOUNG CHRISTIAN WORKER

THE spiritual atmosphere into which this young convert was born became more and more invigorating because of a series of revivals in those parts in 1775 and 1776. It was in 1776 that Jesse Lee obtained an experience of sanctification by which he became wholly consecrated to God and to his service. He studied the doctrine preached, and then began to love the Lord with all his heart and with all his mind and strength. He was then eighteen years of age, and had been converted four years. The church in his father's house, where his father was the class leader, was his earliest training school. The Methodist preachers who came and went, and the people who gathered there helped to develop this young worker for God and souls.

But his own country is not always the best place for a young man to develop. Late in 1777, God led Jesse Lee out from his home to North Carolina, to care for the interests of a relative whose husband had

died. The farm was in the Roanoke Circuit, on which the Rev. Mr. Dobs was then the preacher. Jesse Lee did not make the great mistake which so many young Methodists have made—some, we fear, to their eternal loss—but he at once joined the society and began to meet in class. He had not only to superintend the farm, but to work with his hands, yet he would not suffer himself to be too busy or too tired to go to the house of the Lord on week nights, as well as Sundays. He says that being among strangers he became less timid to speak for his Lord, and to undertake Christian work. He so commended himself to pastor and people that in 1778 he was appointed class leader, though only twenty years old. He deeply felt this responsibility, and felt the more need to cultivate his own spiritual life and to improve his mind. He then formed the excellent habit of taking notes of the sermons he heard. He watched for the divisions the preacher made, and studied the doctrines preached. By this means he was, though unwittingly, taking lessons in dogmatic and in practical theology. When, later, he came to study theology and to sermonize, he found how useful the practice

had been to him. Not a few great preachers have learned to preach in this same way. Jesse Lee continued this practice to the close of his life. The sermons he heard and noted helped him lead his class.

He now began another line of Christian work, to hold neighborhood prayer meetings. Without knowing it, he was following the English Methodist road to the pulpit, via the prayer leaders' and local preachers' "plans." At these cottage meetings be began "begging" the people to be reconciled to God. He did not at first call this exhorting, but it was. He was a weeping class and prayer leader, for often his tears flowed as he spoke to God for the people and to the people for God. This young farmer from Virginia became a busy Christian worker in his new field, his days being spent in honest toil, his evenings and nights in religious work, either in meetings or in reading and study, fitting himself for better service.

He had now begun to write for his own pleasure, not only sermon notes, but other personal matters, so that his journals at last covered three thousand pages of manuscript, all of which, unfortunately, was burned in the Book Concern fire in New

York in 1836. These journals recorded the books he had read, authors, subjects, and number of pages. The record for 1779 shows 2,984 pages read, and the list shows a very wise choice. He was not content to be only a Christian young man, he aimed to be an intelligent and a working Christian. His farming, study, and Christian work kept him too busy for worldly pleasures. He found his chief delight in getting and doing good.

During these years he was not neglectful of his parents and friends at home. Once a year, at least, he went home. He was gladly welcomed to the services in his father's house and in that vicinity, especially as from time to time he showed himself to be a growing worker. Though now nearly of age, he honored his parents, as a part of his Christian life.

Whether Jesse Lee had any idea of preaching in these early days, we know not. Certain it is that God had thoughts of this sort concerning him. God's way is to promote those who are faithful in the least things, by calling them to greater services. He promoted Shepherd-boy David to be, first, king of Hebron; he was faithful there, then God made him king of

Israel. Farmer-boy Jesse Lee is now to be called to be, first, a preacher, then an apostle and founder of churches. This promotion came to him in the natural and Methodistic way. First he became an official exhorter. The date of this step upward is March 8, 1788. He had often exhorted before this, but now he is recognized as holding the office. The Rev. John Dickins was at this time preacher on the Roanoke Circuit. He could not have had a better pastor and leader while his mind was being exercised about preaching. On the 17th of November, 1779, at a place called "Old Barn," he made his first attempt. His text was 1 John 3. 1, 2. His experience was: "I felt more liberty in speaking from the text than I expected to feel when I began. I felt such a desire to please God, and to instruct the people how to serve him, that I was at that time willing to spend my days in the service of God." He preached several times in the following weeks. He was so conscious of his own weakness, and of imperfections in his preaching, that he would go to the woods and lie prostrate on the ground asking pardon, and praying God to bless his imperfect services; but give up preaching

because not able to preach perfectly, he would not. His pastor, John Dickins, had his eye upon him. He had some literary work he wished to finish, and asked Jesse Lee to preach for him on the circuit during his necessary absence. He timidly consented, and thus he had his first taste of the ministry. After a few weeks Mr. Dickins returned, and Jesse Lee went back to his humbler services, which he then felt suited him better.

At the close of 1779 we find Jesse Lee again at home in Virginia. The winter of 1779-80 was the coldest known in Virginia, but Jesse's heart was warm toward the Lord and toward the work to which he felt himself being called.

He was now nearly twenty-two years old. The returns for 1774, the year when he joined the Methodists, show ten circuits, seventeen preachers, and 2,073 members. Now, in 1779, there were 8,577 members, nearly one half of whom were in Virginia. Instead of ten circuits in the five States where Methodism had begun its work there were twenty circuits. The seventeen ministers had increased to forty-four. In 1779 two Conferences were held, one in Kent County, Delaware, April 28, the other in

Fluvanna, Virginia, May 18. Virginia was the banner State for Methodism in those early days of Jesse Lee, farmer-boy, convert, Christian worker, and now local preacher. His preachers and pastors up to this time, to whom he refers, besides Mr. Jarratt, had been Robert Williams, George Shadford, Edward Dromgoole, and William Glendenning, on the Brunswick Circuit, and Messrs. Dobs and John Dickins, on the Roanoke Circuit, in North Carolina. He had also heard Asbury on his visit to the Brunswick Circuit in 1775, and Garrettson at a watch-night service, where he made his second attempt at exhortation. He was highly favored in having such men to influence his life and early attempts at Christian work.

CHAPTER VI

A ZEALOUS LOCAL PREACHER

LAYMEN who preach are in Methodism called "local preachers," to distinguish them from traveling preachers, who are wholly set apart for the work, who itinerate, and are supported by the Church. Lay preachers are local in their labors, and generally support themselves by daily toil, and serve as volunteers on Sundays. About twenty thousand of these occupy English Methodist pulpits every Sunday. Without their volunteer help thousands of churches would have to be closed. American Methodism, to her great loss, has not called out local preachers as has the mother Church. The abandonment of the circuit system has helped to make lay preaching almost a lost art. Lay preachers, such as Stephen and Philip, largely helped to found the apostolic Church. Justin, the Martyr, was a lay preacher, in the early Church. American Methodism was founded by lay preachers —Embury, Webb, and Strawbridge. Nearly all Wesley's "helpers" were lay preachers.

We have seen that Jesse Lee had become a local preacher by preaching his first sermon at the "Old Barn," November 17, 1779. He continued to preach when soldiering, much to the profit of his comrades. On his return home, on November 4, 1780, he had been a local preacher one year, three months of which had been spent in the army. He now took up his work of preaching with renewed vigor.

The year 1781 was a year of perplexity to him. He loved to hear and to preach the Word, and was always busy working with his hands on week days and preaching on Sundays. But wars and rumors of war kept Virginia and North Carolina in a constant ferment. General Greene was drawing Cornwallis northward, away from his supplies at Charleston. The battle of Cowpens was won January 17, 1781, but at Guilford Courthouse (now Greensborough, North Carolina) Cornwallis won the day, but with such loss that he had to retreat to Wilmington, North Carolina, with about half as many as he led out. Greene recaptured Camden, South Carolina, and Cornwallis set out for Petersburg, Virginia, hoping there to be joined by reinforcements from New York. That year, 1781, Greene

won back the Carolinas and drove Cornwallis to Yorktown, Virginia, where he was locked up in his own prison until he gave up the struggle and marched out, October 19, 1781, to the tune of "The World's Upside Down." This was true of the British world in America, for Yorktown practically ended the War of Independence. Lord North hearing of it said, "It is all over," and he then resigned.

The price the Virginians and Carolinians had to pay for these victories was high. Men were pressed into the army. Some, whose principles would not permit them to fight, were whipped, fined, or imprisoned. The circuit preachers were hindered in their work. Homes were made desolate because fathers, husbands, and sons were killed or wounded in battle. Jesse Lee was troubled. He had been drafted a second time, but was released. He preached, led classes, and toiled hard in the vineyard that year, though the war troubled him greatly. He was a man of peace.

Another great question was pressed upon him. It was a question which has stirred every Methodist preacher to the deepest depths of his being, the question, "Ought I to give myself wholly to the ministry of the

Word?" He writes: "I had for some time been deeply exercised about traveling and preaching the gospel; and at times it appeared that I could not with a clear conscience resist the thought, and still was unwilling to go, fearing that I should injure the work of God, which I loved as I did my own life."

He resorts to what may seem to some readers a novel way to dispose of this question. He contemplated marriage. In those days traveling preachers who married usually then ceased to travel. They could not subject wives and children to the hardships of the itinerancy. Hence we find the Virginia Conference was called the "Bachelor Conference." Lee does not then tell us what steps he took to secure a wife, but many years later, on being jibed that one sister had failed to elect him to matrimony, he said, "Neither the Lord nor the woman would consent." He never married. He thought this was to his "spiritual advantage." As we view his pioneering lifework we think it was also of great advantage to the Church. Charles Wesley ceased to itinerate soon after his marriage. Had Lee then married, probably he would never have become an itinerant and the Apostle to New England.

On April 17, 1782, Jesse Lee attended Conference for the first time. This was the tenth Conference of the American Methodists, and was held at Ellis's Meetinghouse, in Sussex County, Virginia. About thirty preachers met. The Rev. Mr. Jarratt, the Anglican priest, was present, and took part in the Conference. He preached the opening sermon, on Hosea, fourteenth chapter. The Conference honored him by advising the preachers to consult with him in the absence of Asbury. He also promised to administer the sacraments in the societies, which the Methodist preachers could not then do. Jesse Lee was profoundly impressed by the consecrated and loving spirit of the ministers. He did not backslide in the least degree at Conference. Hear him: "By reason of what I saw and heard during the four days that the Conference sat, I found my heart truly humbled in the dust, and my desire greatly increased to love and serve God more perfectly than I had ever done before."

At the close of the Conference, Asbury asked him to take a circuit. He was afraid to do so. Asbury told some preachers standing by, "I am going to enlist Brother Lee." One said, "What bounty do you

give?" He answered, "Grace here, and glory hereafter, will be given if he is faithful." Neither Asbury nor the preachers could enlist him at that time, but the question still stirred his soul to the very depths.

He now began to plan his affairs so that he could itinerate if he must. At a quarterly meeting, November 3, 1782, he consented to go on a circuit. He probably determined to settle this question once and for all. After a few weeks on his first circuit, Presiding Elder Peddicord asked him to go with Mr. E. Dromgoole to open up a new circuit near Edenton, in North Carolina. Lee consented, and with Dromgoole reached Edenton on December 1, 1782. In the lowlands from Edenton to Norfolk County, in Virginia, they preached and prospected for sixteen days, holding nineteen meetings. This was largely virgin soil for Methodists. Out of it later came the great Camden Circuit. Jesse Lee then again returned to his father's house, where he farmed, preached as a local preacher, and helped the traveling preachers on the circuit until the spring of 1783. The circuiting with Dromgoole seems to have led him to decide to offer for the itinerancy at the next Conference.

CHAPTER VII

A FAITHFUL BUT NOT A FIGHTING SOLDIER

In the Continental Congress at Philadelphia, June 7, 1776, Richard Henry Lee, of Virginia, moved "That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States." This motion, seconded by John Adams, of Massachusetts, and carried, precipitated the War of Independence. Whether the mover of this resolution was a relative of Jesse Lee we cannot learn. Certainly General Charles Lee, who fought under Washington, was not, for he was a deserter from the English army. For faithlessness he was dismissed from the army by Congress. He died in disgrace. He was not a Virginian Lee. If any reader knows of relationship between the Lees of the War of Independence and the Civil War and Jesse Lee we would like to learn of it.

The center of operations had been moved from Boston and New York to the South. Charleston, South Carolina, was taken,

May 12, 1780. Here Cornwallis had his headquarters. Savannah, Georgia, had been taken December 20, 1778. King George said, "Half a loaf is better than none," hoping, if beaten, to be able to retain the southern territory.

But Cornwallis as he moved northward had to meet Marion and Sumter and the Carolina patriots, some of whom had only saw-blades and old scythes for weapons, and but few guns; yet they kept the British busy. In 1780 the militia was called out and Jesse Lee was drafted to serve as a soldier. He was truly patriotic, and willing to serve his country in any way he conscientiously could. But fighting to kill was contrary to his convictions. He could not as a Christian, and now as a preacher of the gospel, fight to kill. Neither could he even bear arms. Serve his country he would, but not in that way. He went forward trusting that God would open his way for him, which he did. He shall tell his own story: "I did not join the army till the 29th (July, 1780). On the evening of that day I came in sight of the camp, and was soon called on parade, and orders were given for all the soldiers to be furnished with guns. I then lifted my heart to God

and besought him to take my cause into his hands and support me in the hours of trial. The sergeant soon came round with the guns, and offered one to me, but I could not take it. Then the lieutenant brought me one, but I refused to take it. He said I should go under guard. He then went to the colonel, and, coming back, brought a gun and set it down against me. I told him he had as well take it away, or it would fall. He then took me with him and delivered me to the guard. After a while the colonel came, and taking me out, a little way from the guard, he began to converse with me, and to assign many reasons why I should bear arms; but his reasons were not sufficiently cogent to make any alteration in my mind. He then told the guard to take care of me, and so left me."

Thus closed his first day of soldiering, with the young local preacher under guard for refusing to bear arms. The camp was near what is now Raleigh, and close to a tavern. The news of this strange soldier spread, and many people came and talked with him; some left him in tears. Soldiers brought him straw, blankets, and great-coats, for a bed. He found among his fellow prisoners a Baptist. Why he was there

he does not say, perhaps for the same reason as he was. Lee proposed evening prayers in the guardhouse, and called on the Baptist to pray, which he did.

The next morning was Sunday. He was up and singing at daybreak, and soon hundreds of people gathered and joined him. At the close of the meeting Mr. Thomas, the tavern keeper, came to tell him he had heard him praying and was moved to tears, and to ask him to preach to them that day. Lee promised to, if he would get the consent of the colonel, and get a block for him to stand on. The colonel, who was a great swearer, consented, and was moved to labor with the preacher to convince him he ought to bear arms. He could not. He therefore put him to drive a baggage wagon, and to lodge with a Methodist cook. He told him he might preach near his own tent. Lee mounted a bench under the trees and preached from Luke 13. 5: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Rain soon drove them into a house, where he finished his sermon. They wanted to take a collection for him, but he would not let them.

On Monday morning he began his duties as wagon driver. They went down to the

Pedee River, in South Carolina, where they encamped, having short rations and forced marches on the way. Jesse Lee amid swearing soldiers felt his need of special grace to live rightly before them. He really did the work of a chaplain with great success. He says: "For some weeks I hardly ever prayed in public, or preached, or reproved a sinner, without seeing some good effects produced by my labors."

On August 16, 1780, the battle at Camden, South Carolina, was lost, and General Gates himself came near being captured. This spread gloom over the camp, and silenced the lips of many swearers. A retreat was ordered to North Carolina. Sickness caused Mr. Lee to leave camp for a week. On the morning after his return the colonel put him among the pioneers. He soon became sergeant of pioneers, which was a safe and easy berth. The hard marching, short rations, and other trials led him closer to God. Near Salisbury, on September 15, the soldiers relieved the monotony by taking a well-known Tory from under guard and hanging him from a tree, without judge or jury. But no one would tell who were the guilty ones. The retreat was a hard one, for the British were

sometimes close to them. Amid the fugitives from British guns the colonel rode up to Lee and said, "Well, Lee, don't you think you could fight now?" "I told him," says Lee, "I could fight with switches, but I could not kill a man?" The victory at Kings Mountain, on October 7, checked the British advance northward, and heartened the tired and weary retreaters. To the brave Carolinian sharpshooters from the backwoods largely belongs the credit of this victory on the borders of the Carolinas.

Sunday morning, October 29, 1780, was a glad morning for Mr. Lee, for then he was honorably discharged from the army. Of it he writes: "The general said as there were two sergeants of pioneers, and one was sufficient, it would be best for me to resign, and as I was the oldest in office I might have the privilege if I chose it. I accepted the offer, took my discharge, settled some business, took leave of many of my old acquaintances, and left the army." Though he had not fought for his country, he had worked for it as a good soldier of both his country and of Jesus Christ. He left the army a stronger and better Christian and worker than he entered it. He had not sacrificed his principles, and God

had cared for and led him in their maintenance.

He now set out on foot, and alone, for his father's house in Virginia. After six days of tramping through the scenes of the war, sometimes faring well and sometimes ill at the hands of the people, he reached home November 4. He was made glad in finding that during his absence a sister and a brother had become converted.

CHAPTER VIII

AN ITINERANT PREACHER

THE Virginia Conference of 1783 was held at Ellis's Meetinghouse, Sussex County, May 6. At this Conference Mr. Lee was admitted on trial, and appointed to Caswell Circuit, North Carolina. He tells how he felt about it: "Notwithstanding I have had ten years' experience as a Christian, and have been a public speaker more than five years, I trembled at the thought of the station I was about to fill." He left home and weeping relatives, and mounted the itinerant wheel for his circuit, which he reached on June 23. After three weeks' experience it was decided that the circuit was too poor for two preachers, and Mr. Lee being the junior, at the quarterly meeting he was removed to the Amelia Circuit, in Virginia. He labored on this circuit from August 24, 1783, until February 14, 1784. He was then removed to Sussex Circuit, where on February 18 he began his work by preaching in his father's house. On Friday, March 12, he celebrated the twenty-

sixth anniversary of his birthday. His first year in the ministry was marked by his fully consecrated life and service, and was very acceptable to the people.

April 30, 1784, finds the Conference again, for the third time, in Ellis's Meeting-house. Mr. Jarratt is there, and full of zeal for Christ and Methodism. At this Conference Mr. Lee is appointed to Salisbury Circuit, North Carolina, which he reached on June 9, after a visit to his home, as was his invariable custom on changing circuits. He was a great lover of his father's house, and of his kindred there. Isaac Smith was his colleague; they met at Salisbury, June 12. Lee here turned aside and visited the camp where in 1780 he was forced to company with the wicked. He contrasts them with his present associates. Large congregations greeted him on this new circuit. His labors were greatly blessed to them.

The spirit in which he now labored is seen from his journal of Tuesday, August 10: "I preached at Tilman's and felt an ardent desire to be of some service to the souls of the people. There was a gracious move among the hearers, and before I got through my discourse I wept over my

audience for some time. None but God knows what I felt at that time; my heart was ready to break with grief on the account of poor sinners who were perishing in their sins. In many cases it appeared as if I could preach till I dropped dead in the pulpit, if it would be the means of bringing souls to the knowledge of God. My heart cried out, 'O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the year!' " In this spirit he toiled and was ready to suffer, and if needs be die for God and souls. In October of this year he came near to being drowned in the Yadkin River, where his horse got among the hidden rocks. He was a good rider but a poor swimmer. We once saw an old call for a preacher "who is a good swimmer, as there are several rivers to cross on the round." Jesse Lee would not have done for that circuit.

The year 1784 was a most memorable one in Methodist history. John Wesley had that year secured the Deed, which put all legal powers in British Methodism into the hands of one hundred of his preachers after his death. The Legal Hundred is the law-making body of the Wesleyan Methodist Church to-day. John Wesley had also decided to organize the scattered Methodists

in America into the "Methodist Episcopal Church." He had ordained the Rev. Thomas Coke, D.C.L., as superintendent, or bishop, and the Revs. Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey as deacons and elders, and sent them to America to organize the new Church in the new country. He revised the Book of Common Prayer and made it "The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America." He also prepared "A Collection of Psalms and Hymns" as the new hymn book for the new Church.

On December 12, 1784, Mr. Lee was notified that Dr. Coke had arrived, and was calling him to the Conference to be held at Baltimore on December 24. This was the famous "Christmas Conference," at which the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized, and Francis Asbury, at the request of John Wesley, and by the unanimous vote of the preachers, was ordained superintendent. Lee was five hundred miles from Baltimore, and in twelve days the Conference would meet. He could not attend. We wish he could have been there, and detailed its important doings, which he probably would have done.

From that Conference Bishop Asbury set out to visit his see, which was to be

probably the largest in Christendom. In February, 1785, he reached Lee's circuit. They met at Colonel Hendron's. Just before the service there Mr. Asbury appeared in black gown, cassock, and bands, much to the grief of plain Jesse Lee, who feared that such a clerical display would prejudice the Americans against Methodism, and thus prove to be an impediment to its movements. The saintly Henry Willis was with Asbury as his helper. Later, Lee's arguments with Asbury seem to have been successful in removing the canonical garments. For both these and the Prayer Book were later laid aside, as not adapted to the pioneer work before the new Church.

Jesse Lee and Bishop Asbury were now becoming great friends. Asbury took Lee with him to Charleston, South Carolina, as a helper. On their way they passed through Cheraw. The wise Providence in this trip with Asbury is seen by the fact that at Cheraw Lee first received his call to his greatest lifework. It was on this wise: A young clerk of the merchant who entertained them was from Massachusetts. Mr. Lee got acquainted with him, and from him learned much about New England. He at once inclined to go there to labor. Asbury

did not favor it, perhaps because New England was fairly well churched. Lee tried to interest other preachers, and rested not until about four years later his desire was fulfilled and he became the Apostle of Methodism to New England, of which he had learned from the young clerk in Cheraw, in February, 1785. Johnson was not the name of that young clerk, as we shall later see. He was one of the many unnamed ones whose influence upon history has been great. The three journeyed on to Charleston, passing through Georgetown. At Charleston they all preached where John and Charles Wesley had preached in 1736, and where Pilmoor had preached, as a Methodist, in 1773. Asbury appointed Willis preacher in charge there, and he founded the present Methodist work in that city. Asbury then sent Lee back to his own circuit. Methodist preachers then were certainly traveling preachers. When a bishop said "Come," the preacher came; when he said, "Go," he went. Seldom more than six months would one stay on the same circuit. Mr. Lee was away from his circuit twenty-six days with Asbury. He returned in time to take leave before departing for Conference and another field.

At the Conference which met at Green Hills, April 20, 1785, he met Dr. Coke. On the question of slavery being one of the greatest evils they agreed, but on methods, Lee, knowing the South, was wiser than Coke, the stranger in America. Lee went on to the Conference at Mason's on Brunswick Circuit, and thence to Maryland Conference which met at Baltimore, June 1. Here he was appointed to Carolina Circuit, where he labored until March, 1786, and then left for home and the Virginia Conference, at Lane's Meetinghouse, in Sussex, April 10. He then went back to the Conference at Abington, Maryland, which met May 8. Here he declined deacon's orders, to which he was now eligible. He was sent to Kent Circuit. On this circuit the blacks and children received his special attention. The circuit included four counties—Kent, Cecil, Caroline, and Queen Anne—and was one of the first formed in America. Three hundred were added during Mr. Lee's term. He preached thirty-one times and met fifty-two classes within four weeks. This was his pleasantest and most successful circuit thus far.

May 1, 1787, finds him at Conference in Baltimore, in and near which he was now

to labor. Until August he worked on a circuit near Baltimore, then he moved into the city. Here he made a new departure, by preaching out of doors. He began on the commons, then in the markets, where the people gathered. He thus reached a very large class of non-churchgoers, and gained experiences of the open-air treatment, which served him well on his advent to Boston, as we shall later see. Learning of the great revival in his home region, in March, he sets out for that region, where he found that all his brothers and sisters had been converted. He stayed until April, and preached to large congregations at Petersburg and elsewhere, then went back to his Baltimore work, where he found the revival fire had preceded him.

At the Conference which met in Baltimore, September 9, 1788, he was again urged to be ordained, but again modestly declined. At the Conference in Philadelphia the same month, Bishop Asbury labored with him in vain on the same subject. He was appointed to Flanders Circuit. Here he seems for the first time to come into contact with Calvinism. He met it later in New England, and this experience doubtless helped prepare him for the future

conflict. He here met with a peculiar case of conversion. An Indian squaw was convicted of sin. She knew only two English words—"January" and "February." She made them her prayer, "January, February!" until God answered her, and forgave her sins. On March 12, 1789, he observed his birthday with prayer, praise, and reconsecration to his work. He is now thirty-one years old, and at the next Conference is to receive the appointment which has made him famous in American Methodist history.

CHAPTER IX

SENT TO NEW ENGLAND

On May 28, 1789, in John Street Church, New York city, the fortieth Methodist Conference in America began its session. Bishops Coke and Asbury were present, also Richard Whatcoat. Twenty in all were present at this second Conference held in New York, that of 1788 being the first. Three important things were done there in 1789. A Book Room was decided on for Philadelphia, and John Dickins appointed book steward. A congratulatory address was ordered prepared, and presented to George Washington, who was inaugurated President of the United States on April 30. Bishops Coke and Asbury duly presented it. It was the first received from any branch of the Church. Coke was criticised in America and in England for having part in this, but Asbury defended him.

The third transaction done there which makes it memorable is that Jesse Lee was sent to New England. In his most valuable, and now very rare, Short History of

the Methodists, which made him the first American Methodist historian, on page 142, he writes: "We had one new circuit in Connecticut, called Stamford, which was the first that was ever formed in that State, or any of the New England States. It was my lot to go to that circuit alone, and to labor by myself. Another preacher was appointed to the circuit with me, but he failed and never came, and I had to labor and suffer alone amongst a strange people." Stamford Circuit "consisted of some small classes held in Stamford and Sharon." They were connected with circuits in New York State and not yet separated as New England societies. These small classes were the germ cells of New England Methodism, carried over from the adjoining State, and to be developed under the care of the first itinerant sent there, Jesse Lee.

There were reformers before Luther and the Reformation. There were Methodist prophets in New England before Jesse Lee. The most ancient of these were Charles Wesley, in 1736, and George Whitefield, in 1740. Shall we call these the major prophets, and call Richard Boardman, in 1772, William Black, in 1784, Cornelius Cook, in

1787, and Freeborn Garrettson, in 1787 and 1790, the minor prophets? All their voices were heard crying in that Methodist wilderness before that of Jesse Lee, the Apostle to New England, in 1789. The prophets came and went. This apostle came to stay, and, "if possible, to establish the Methodist doctrine and discipline, and to raise up a people for the Lord" in that new and hard field.

Methodism had been organized in Old England fifty years, and in America twenty-three years, before it was definitely determined to establish it in New England. The work in Old England and in the Middle and South Atlantic States grew so rapidly that workers could not be spared for New England, which was better supplied with churches than many other parts. It was regarded as walled up high by Calvinistic battlements, which looked very forbidding to all who dared to enter it, excepting at the five points, which were very zealously guarded.

The man who dared to go up and possess a part of this goodly land for God and for Methodism was Jesse Lee. His was not a sudden but a very deliberately made decision. Since talking with that clerk from

Massachusetts, in Cheraw, some years before, he had felt drawn to New England.

Let us now take a few snapshots at him, as he goes forth on his mission. He went alone, though a young man had been appointed with him. Perhaps this young man's courage, like that of John Mark, in the Acts of the Apostles, failed him at the thought of the difficulties in the way. All alone, in June, Jesse Lee entered New England for the first time. On June 17, 1789, he is at Norwalk, Connecticut, which State is to have the lasting honor of his first New England labors. There, a Mr. Rogers was not willing he should preach in his home, and Mrs. Rogers would not consent to his preaching in an old house of hers near by. Then an orchard was refused him. Nothing daunted, he betook himself to the public highway, and under the shade of an apple tree began an open-air service. His singing and prayer drew a tolerable congregation, who quietly listened to this his first sermon in Norwalk. We say *his* first sermon, because, contrary to many of the histories, this was not the first Methodist sermon in Norwalk. The Arminian Magazine of London, 1791, contains the journals of the Rev. William Black, of England and

Nova Scotia. Black, on his way to the famous Christmas Conference, in 1784, arrived at New York on October 20, and preached a few times. He then went to Long Island "with Brother Cox." He traveled two or three days. "Preaching," he says, "at Serringtown, Cow-Harbour, and Huntingdon, I crossed the Sound into Connecticut. I preached in the evening at North-Walk, and the next morning rode on to Stratfield. I preached six or seven times among the people here, and then returned to New York. Dr. Coke had arrived there, and two other preachers from England: and were gone on toward Baltimore." This shows us that Black preached at Norwalk about two and a half years before Cornelius Cook, and four and a half years before Lee opened his commission for New England there, at Norwalk, June 17, 1789. Lee's text there was, "Ye must be born again" (John 3. 7). This was his first message to New England. At the close of the service he told the people he would preach again in two weeks in the same place if no house should be opened to him. He writes: "I felt happy that we were favored with so comfortable a place. Who knows but I shall yet have a place in this town where I

may lay my head?" Could he now visit Norwalk he would find many homes among the good Methodists there.

The next day, June 18, Lee rode sixteen miles to Fairfield. He put up at Penfield's tavern. He obtained the courthouse for a service, and got the schoolmaster to send word home by the children that he would preach at six o'clock. Mrs. Penfield asked him if he had a liberal education. "I told her I had just enough to carry me through the country." Later when at different places he was questioned by pastors and village lawyers about his knowledge of the languages he replied to them in broken Dutch, which he had learned in the South, and which they mistook for Hebrew, and then passed him up in scholarship. Often his ready wit thus came to his help. After Mrs. Penfield had heard him preach she was so pleased that she urged him to visit her sister and preach at her house. His second text in Connecticut was Rom. 6. 23. The service began with the schoolmaster and three or four women for a congregation; before the close thirty or forty had gathered. The Penfields refused pay for his board and bed, and asked him to call again. Friday found him at Mrs.

Timothy Wheeler's, sister of his hostess of yesterday. Here he received a warm welcome, and found results of Mr. Black's preaching in 1784. They had been wishing for a Methodist preacher to come ever since Black left them.

The following Sunday, June 21, found him in New Haven, the Athens of the State. It was a stormy day, but at five o'clock he preached in the courthouse to a considerable congregation, from Amos 5. 6: "Seek ye the Lord, and ye shall live." The president of the college, a Congregational minister, and many students were in his congregation. "The people paid great attention to what I said, and several expressed their satisfaction." After a few days' absence he is again at New Haven, preaching in a Congregational chapel secured by friends, who also had the statehouse bell rung to call the people to the service. The people were pleased, but no one invited him home with them after service. But he had not been back in his tavern room long before David Beecher, the blacksmith, came. Lee says: "He asked me to go home with him, and said he would be willing to entertain me when I came to town again. I went with him, and his wife was very kind."

This was Beecher-like, open-hearted and open-minded to the truth whencesoever it came. David Beecher, the blacksmith, of New Haven, was Henry Ward Beecher's grandfather, as Henry Ward Beecher once gladly acknowledged. On the Wednesday after his first sermon in New Haven, Lee went over the stony way to Reading, and preached in a schoolhouse at six o'clock. An old minister here was his host. This minister was not himself a dancer, but was a strong advocate of that art. Here Lee organized *his* second class meeting in Connecticut before the end of the year 1789. From Wednesday, June 24, to Thursday, July 2, he had preached at Reading, Danbury, Ridgefield, Rockwell, Canaan, Middlesex and again at Norwalk and Fairfield. He "had some hope that an impression was made in each of these places."

On Friday, July 3, "I preached at Stratfield, at the house of Deacon Hawley. It was filled with hearers." He had a good time preaching. "The greater part of them kneeled down when we prayed, a thing that I suppose some of them never did before in public." The principal village of Stratfield was Stratford, whither he went on the morrow. He entered the village

rather dejected, but secured the town house for a service, and sent a man out on his own horse to call the villagers to the service. The Congregationalists urged him to use their church, and, though he declined for that time, they rung their bell at sunset to call the people to worship. He was greatly helped in that service. At its close Solomon Curtis invited him to make his house his home, and then took him by the hand and led him there. He writes: "I don't know that I have had so much kindness showed me in a new place since I came to the State."

Here at Stratfield, on September 20 of this same year, 1789, Lee formed his first class meeting in the State of Connecticut. He held a "kind of class meeting" that day with about twenty persons. The next day he really organized, with three women for members, who, he writes, "appeared willing to bear the cross, and have their names cast out as evil, for the Lord's sake." Devoted women were the first Methodists organized into a society by Lee in the State of Connecticut. This must be written to their great honor. The first man he received was at Reading, three months later, December 28; his name was Aaron Sanford. He

became a preacher, and the ancestor of Methodist preachers down to this date. His brother, and also a lawyer, Samuel S. Smith, soon joined with him. They also became preachers. Greenfield, Newfield, and Milford are visited within about three months. The result of this prospecting tour was a new circuit, the first real circuit in New England. It included Norwalk, Fairfield, Stratford, Milford, Reading, Danbury, and Canaan, besides some small parishes like "Mutton Lane." This was now called Reading Circuit instead of the Stamford Circuit, to which Lee had been appointed, and which then existed only on paper.

During these months, and until February 27, 1790, more than eight months in all, he was alone in the work, but hoping help would come from the South. Having mapped out his first circuit, on the last day of August he says, "I set out on a tour for Rhode Island State." He writes of Guilford, and of Lieutenant Hopsall, and the good Baptists he found there; also of Killingworth, Saybrook, Lyme, and New London, and of kind and helpful Jonathan Brooks, who there received him. He spent a good week in Rhode Island, then returned to Connecticut.

Friday, October 23, finds him at David Olds's in Weston. At this place, which later was called Easton, was built in 1790 the first Methodist chapel in New England. This edifice was properly called "Lee's Chapel." Not Boston but Easton, not Massachusetts but Connecticut, has the honor of having in it the first Methodist meetinghouse in New England. It was near the upper edge of Stratfield.

February 27, 1790, was a happy day to Jesse Lee. Of that day he writes: "Three preachers came to my help from Maryland, namely, Jacob Brush, an elder, George Roberts, and Samuel Smith, young preachers. They met me at a quarterly meeting at a place called Dantown, on the state line between New York and Connecticut. Their presence was reviving to the brethren, and to me in particular." Certainly it would be after months of lonely pioneer travels and toils and sufferings. As a specimen, on December 24, a cold wintry night, after preaching at Fairfield, he writes: "To-night, thanks be to God! I was invited by a widow woman to put up at her house. This is the first invitation I have had since I first came to the place, which is between six and seven months. O my

Lord, send more laborers into this part of thy vineyard. I love to break up new ground and hunt the lost souls in New England, though it is hard work; but when Christ is with me, hard things are made easy, and rough ways made smooth."

In one of his Connecticut tours he influenced another blacksmith, one of whose sons became eminent. His name was Bangs. He would not let his family hear the Methodist, but one of his sons, then about twelve years old, heard of him and never forgot him. Later, this son, Nathan, became Dr. Nathan Bangs, who took up Lee's well-begun work in New England, and later became the second great historian of American Methodism. John Kendrick Bangs is his grandson.

It was a glad day for Lee when the reinforcements from the South came to him. He writes: "No one knows but God and myself what comfort and joy I felt at their arrival." There were now more preachers than classes, and only about two members to each preacher, but the field was large and a part of it well mapped out for them by Lee. When Lee had initiated his colleagues he went forth to break up new ground.

The Conference year which began with

Lee's appointment to New England, in May, 1789, was a long one; it did not close until October 4, 1790, when it again met in New York. For more than eight of the seventeen months Lee had been alone in the work. At the Conference of 1790 four new circuits had been formed. The New Haven Circuit covered one hundred and twenty miles, and included three cities and five thickly settled towns, besides smaller places. This circuit was formed in March, 1790; it "extended along the post road from Milford to Hartford." The Hartford Circuit, which took in both sides of the Connecticut River, was formed in the latter part of the spring of 1790. The Litchfield Circuit, "which took in the northwest part of Connecticut State, was formed about the beginning of the spring of 1790." The fourth circuit added this first Conference year of Lee in New England was the Boston Circuit.

Before speaking of Boston, let us glance at places visited by Lee during this Conference year, May, 1789, to October, 1790. We can but mention chief places visited and preached in by this pioneer and founder in those eight months after his helpers came. March 3 finds him in Wethersfield, then

again in Hartford, Farmington, Derby, Milford, then in New Haven again. In April he goes out of the State into Windham County, Vermont, where he stays two days; then passing through a part of New Hampshire he entered Massachusetts for the first time, and on May 30 we find him at Wilbraham. He writes his first impressions: "Not so much satisfaction in Massachusetts as in Connecticut," where we find him again on May 10, at Middletown. Had he known that at Wilbraham there would soon be the Wesleyan Academy, now the oldest in the Methodist Church, and at Middletown, Connecticut, Wesleyan University, now the oldest Methodist university, how he would have rejoiced! The first Methodist sermon preached in Middletown, on December 7, 1789, was one of the most fruitful seeds dropped into the Nutmeg State. In June, 1790, he set his face toward the east. Norwich, New London, Stonington are visited, then on into Rhode Island, at Newport, Bristol, Warren, and Providence. Surely he was a traveling preacher.

April 2, 1790, at Tolland, Connecticut, he found remnants of George Whitefield's work in the "New Lights." A Methodist church was built here in 1794.

CHAPTER X

FIRST ENTERS BOSTON

BEING now reinforced with helpers, Mr. Lee left them to carry on the well-begun work while he went forth to open up new fields of labor. On Friday, July 9, 1790, he entered Boston for the first time. Its population was then less than twenty thousand. Just before he came Mr. Garrettson had visited Boston, and before leaving had provided a lodging for Lee, and also a place to preach in. He also met Lee on his way to Boston and told him of these places. Thrift does not seem to have known of Garrettson's visit and preparations for Lee, and of his meeting him on the way to Boston. Mr. Lee soon announced that he would preach on the Common, on Sunday, July 11, at six o'clock in the evening. He had preached on commons and in market places in the South. Although no *original* sources speak of the Old Elm Tree, tradition has always said that this was the spot where he placed the borrowed table, on which he stood, and preached under its

umbrageous shadow, as probably Whitefield had done before him. This was the great speaking place on Boston Common. The present elm is a scion of the historic tree.

At the appointed time, with only a few people standing by to see what the stranger would do, he gave out the hymn beginning:

> Come, sinner, to the gospel feast;
> Let every soul be Jesus' guest;
> There need not one be left behind,
> For God hath bidden all mankind.

Then, himself starting the tune, he made Boston Common vocal with his sonorous voice, as it called the people together by holy song. Then he devoutly knelt and prayed—such a prayer! Who would not like to have heard it? Then, taking out his pocket Bible, he read the Scripture lesson, after which he probably "lined out" the hymn:

> Blow ye the trumpet, blow!
> The gladly solemn sound
> Let all the nations know,
> To earth's remotest bound,
> The year of jubilee is come!
> Return, ye ransomed sinners, home.

Now the congregation has greatly increased. He announces his text. It is not recorded. Perhaps it was the same he used

for his first sermon in New England: "Ye must be born again." His congregation, when he closed that service, he estimated at between two and three thousand persons —the population was less than twenty thousand. Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote that figures, like greens, shrink greatly in boiling. Guessed-at congregations usually shrink greatly in counting; but we quote the histories, and keep an open mind.

The new preacher preached what were to them new doctrines, such as free grace, full salvation, and blessed assurance of it after it is obtained. It is said that, as he was reading the couplet which says,

> There need not one be left behind,
> For God hath bidden all mankind,

a Calvinist present shouted, "That isn't true! It is only for the elect!" or some such utterance. But Jesse Lee and the Methodist Church he represented believed that "whosoever will" are the elect, and whosoever will *not,* and they alone, are the non-elect; that salvation is provided for every man's body and soul; that a believer may *know* his sins forgiven; and that a Christian may be made perfect in love in this life. These were doctrines unknown in the

New England of those days. This was New Testament liberalism. These and all such doctrines were then counted as heresy, and the Methodists were called heretics. Later the cry went out that six hundred Methodist preachers had invaded New England, preaching damnable doctrines and picking men's pockets, and people were cautioned to beware of them and to give them no quarter.

When he had finished his first sermon under the Old Elm he announced that he would preach there again on the next Sunday. On Monday morning he went to Salem and preached in Mr. Joshua Spalding's pulpit, the present Tabernacle Church. Then, on to Ipswich, and to Newburyport, where Mr. Murray, the Presbyterian minister, learning he was a follower of Wesley, offered to treat him as a gentleman, but not as a preacher by inviting him to his pulpit. An added reason was that he had heard of one of his kind who had held meetings in four different places in one day. Mr. Lee told him he was the very man. He secured the courthouse and preached his first sermon there on Thursday, July 15. He seems to have preached in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, before this service. During his

absence three of those who had consented to let him have the courthouse tried to exclude him, but, a crowd having gathered, one of the selectmen opened the doors to him and them. He also preached in the same place at six o'clock the next morning, a new thing in the place, but a great many attended. After preaching he went to Whitefield's vault, which is under the Communion table of Mr. Murray's church. Mr. Murray and Mr. Marshall, the Separatist minister, went with him. Mr. Lee was allowed to bring away a small piece of Whitefield's burial gown. Having entered that vault, and handled Whitefield's bones, we can easily imagine Lee's thoughts and feelings there. On Friday, 16th, Lee preached in Danvers. On Saturday, 17th, he preached in Marblehead. These dates are given by Lee. On Sunday, July 18, he again preached for the second time on Boston Common, "to about three thousand people." During that week he preached in a private house and in a vacant Baptist church in Boston. On Tuesday, 20th, he preached in a private house in Charlestown, now a part of Boston. On the next Sabbath we find him preaching for the third time on Boston Common.

After his third Sunday in Boston he went to the quarterly meeting at Middlefield, which was held on the 23d of July. He preached at Enfield and Hartford on his way. From July to October we find him toiling in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont, opening new preaching places. At the close of the sixteen months between the Conferences he found he had traveled several thousand miles, and preached in six States, "and in chief part of the large towns in New England." The Conference met again in New York, October 4, 1790. Here he reported his work. He there consented to be ordained deacon in private, and elder in public, on the next day. To please him, Bishop Asbury doffed his cassock, gown, and bands at his ordination. Mr. Lee was a lover of simplicity, and thought that such paraphernalia would not appeal to the people whom they sought to save. He was then appointed to the Boston Circuit. Concerning this his second coming to New England and to Boston he writes: "I took my station on the 13th day of November, 1790. Mr. Freeborn Garrettson had visited that town in the course of the preceding summer and preached. I made them a visit in July."

This time he met with a very cold reception in classic Boston. He had not a friend to greet him, nor a home to go to. He had hard work to find a place where to lay his head, and much harder work to find a house to preach in. He had a big appointment, but it was all out of doors. True, it was Boston, which might perhaps compensate him for some disadvantages. On Sunday morning he went to a Universalist church in Boston. In the evening he found a private house to preach in. During the whole of the next week, and for a whole month, he sought in vain for a place to establish a Methodist meeting. December weather, in New England, was too cold for services on the Common.

It was exceedingly hard for Methodism, even by the agency of Jesse Lee, to get established in Boston. He writes:

"We preached a long time in Boston before we formed a society, but on the 13th day of January, 1792, we joined a few in society, and after a short time they began to increase in numbers. We met with uncommon difficulties here from the beginning, for the want of a convenient house to preach in. We began in private houses and could seldom keep possession of them long.

At last we obtained liberty to hold meetings in a schoolhouse; but that too was soon denied us. We then rented a chamber in the north end of the town, where we continued to meet a considerable time regularly. The society then undertook to get them a meetinghouse, but being poor, and but few in number, they could do but little. We begged money for them in Baltimore, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, and in Delaware State, in Philadelphia, and in New York, and by these exertions we were able to proceed and began the building. On the 28th day of August, 1795, the corner stone was laid of the first Methodist meetinghouse in Boston, which was fixed at the north end and was built of wood forty-six feet by thirty-six, with galleries in front, and in both sides of the house.

"After we began to preach in the new meetinghouse we had large congregations to hear us, when we preached at night; but it was some time before we had the house filled with steady hearers on the Sabbath day. Most of the people that were fond of hearing us, did not like to leave their own meetinghouses when their minister preached."

CHAPTER XI

INVITED TO LYNN

JESSE LEE had now come to Massachusetts to stay. From Boston he moved on to Lynn. It was on Saturday, the 13th of November, 1790, that he again arrived in Boston. The next day being Sunday he went to hear a Universalist, but at night "he preached to a small company in a private house." He tried in vain to get a house to preach in that week. John Carnes, a Boston merchant, entertained him one evening, and "said he would assist me in anything he could." "The greater part of the week was wet, so that I could go out but little. My cry was, Lord help me!"

Now came his call to Lynn. We will let him tell his own story of this call: "Monday, 29th (November), we had a letter from a gentleman in Lynn, who desired me to come and see him, and gave me some encouragement, for he said he had a desire to hear some of the Methodists preach. I then began to think that the Lord was about opening a way for me to preach in that place."

It has been frequently stated that Jesse Lee left Boston for Lynn on a Sunday evening; as he had no late evening service in Boston that day. We ourselves have written: "Then in the evening, leaving the small congregation to whom he had preached, and the town which had received him so coldly, he set out in the darkness for Lynn," etc. But, the higher criticism on the subject has revealed, and Jesse Lee himself is the revealer, in this case, that he did not leave Boston for Lynn on a Sunday, but "on Monday, December 13."

It was just two weeks after his invitation before he set out for Lynn. We are somewhat surprised at this. We conclude that his desire to open up work in Boston was such that he felt he must not leave that city. Again we let him tell his own story of his advent to Lynn. He writes: "Monday, 13th December, 1790, about two o'clock I left Boston and went in the stage to Benjamin Johnson's, in Lynn, about twelve miles. I got there a little after dark, and was very gladly received by him and his family. I felt as though I was at home as soon as I arrived. I had not been there long before he expressed a desire of having a Methodist society set up in the town,

though he had not heard a Methodist preach for nearly twenty years. In this place I found several persons that had heard some of our preachers in the South, in past years. Some of the people consider it as a very favorable providence that I have come to Lynn at this time, and they bid me welcome with a cheerful heart."

"Tuesday, 14th. At night, at Mr. Johnson's, I preached on John 3. 17: 'For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.' I had a good many hearers, and great freedom in preaching. I bore a public testimony against unconditional election and reprobation: and maintained that Christ died for all men, without respect to persons. I felt much of the power and love of God, and earnestly begged the people to turn from their sins, and come to Christ. The hearers were very attentive, and a few of them seemed to be somewhat affected. Bless the Lord, O, my soul! for bringing me among this people."

Lee seems to have remained in Lynn for a whole week, for under date of "Wednesday, 22d," he writes: "I was much pressed by some persons to stay longer, and when they found that I could not, they earnestly

begged me to come among them again as soon as possible. Several talked strongly of forming a Methodist society. I let them have our rules, and left them to think further about it. We then set out in a sleigh, and had a very cold, disagreeable ride to Boston. When I arrived in Boston everything appeared as dark as when I left it, respecting my preaching. I had to get a new boarding place. When I settled my past boarding I had two shillings and a penny left, which was all that I had some days before. I felt concerned about my purse, not knowing that there was enough in it to discharge the debt due for my board. I was unwilling to let the people know that my money was just gone, for fear that they should think it was money only I was after. But I soon felt confidence in God, that He would provide for me, though I knew not how. However, a man in Lynn offered to buy a magazine that I had for my own use. I very willingly parted with it, and by that means was enabled to discharge the debt. And if I can always have two shillings by me, beside paying all I owe, I think I shall be satisfied."

Thus Jesse Lee's own story of his going to Lynn spoils some of our rhetoric about

that "dramatic ride to Lynn, on a Sunday night, after preaching in Boston," etc., but, as if to compensate for this, we find in Stevens's history an incident of one of Lee's day rides to Lynn which illustrates his ready wit and humor. Here is the story, which is not apocryphal, but is found in Stevens's accepted book, History of American Methodism, on page 250:

"It was on his way from Boston to Lynn that he had the famous trial of wit with two lawyers. While riding along he perceived them hastening after him on horseback, with evident expectations of amusement. They entered into conversation with him on extemporaneous speaking, one on each side of him. 'Don't you often make mistakes?' 'Yes.' 'Well, what do you do with them? Let them go?' 'Sometimes I do,' replied the preacher, dryly; 'if they are very important I correct them; if not, or if they express the truth, though differently from what I designed, I often let them go. For instance, if in preaching I should wish to quote the text which says, "The devil is a liar and the father of it," and should happen to misquote it and say he was a "lawyer," etc., why, it is so near the truth I should probably let it pass.' 'Humph!' exclaimed the

lawyer, 'I don't know whether you are more a knave or a fool.' 'Neither,' replied Lee, looking from one to the other; 'I believe I am just between the two.' The gentlemen of the bar looked at each other, and were soon in advance, hastening on their way."

He made many trips to and from Boston and Lynn that winter. (The electric cars were not then running.) How did he feel when he had no lawyers for company? He tells us how he felt at just about this time: "I set out, and my soul was transported with joy; the snow falling, the wind blowing, prayer ascending, faith increasing, grace descending, heaven smiling, and love abounding." Isn't this the language of one of God's conquering heroes?

This grand old Methodist father reminds us of the Pilgrim fathers, of whom it is written that: "Amid the blinding snows of winter, in which they were knee-deep, and with the sleet hailing into their patient faces, yet

"Amid the storm they sang,
And the stars heard and the sea;
And the sounding aisles of the dim woods rang
To the anthem of the free."

Even so this Methodist father doubtless often made the Lynn marshes ring with

hallelujahs as he faced the northeast tempests which swept across the coast at his side as he journeyed to and from Lynn that winter. All honor to the memory of this Methodist hero! All honor to Lynn, which gave him his first warm welcome to Massachusetts. That was probably a bitterly cold Monday afternoon, December 13, 1790, when Jesse Lee took the stage and went out of cold, classic Boston to the colder coast road which led to Lynn. But he knew where he was going, and had an invitation in his pocket, which was more than he had when he entered Boston. His host, Benjamin Johnson, lived on the corner of Market and Essex Streets. On the site of his house now stands the Exchange building.

A tradition says that Mr. Johnson fetched him from Boston in his sulky; he himself says, he "went in the stage," but he reached there just the same, and doubtless, after family prayers, retired for the night. Rising bright and early, he might have been seen upon the street next morning.

Who was this Benjamin Johnson, to whom Massachusetts owes so much? He was a shoe manufacturer in Lynn, who is said to have owned three coasters, which he loaded

with shoes and took to points on the eastern coast and sold. He would be away from Lynn four or even six months at a time. It was probably on one of such trips that he tasted the good Methodism which he desired to share with his Lynn neighbors. It seems to have agreed with the Johnson family, for not only was Benjamin the one who introduced Lee to Lynn and the chief donor toward the first church, but his son, Legare, or "Legree," as he was called, was a leader in the erection of the second church building on the same site.

Mr. Johnson's house soon became too cramped, and they adjourned to the barn in Essex Street. On February 20, 1791, the first class meeting was formed. Its eight members were his host and hostess, Enoch Mudge (honored name!) and wife, and four women. This was the first Methodist society in Massachusetts. One week later twenty were added. By May 9 it had fifty-eight members. On that same date seventy men took certificates, which read:

> This may certify that Moses Goodrich, of Lynn, attends public worship with the Methodists in Lynn and freely contributes to the support of their ministry.
>
> Signed in behalf of the society,
> JESSE LEE, *Elder*.

By these they were relieved from paying taxes to support the Congregational minister, whom they did not like.

Where was Boston all this time? Behind in the Methodist race, for her first society was not organized until July 13, 1792, and the corner stone of her first chapel, which was in Methodist Alley, now Hanover Avenue, was not laid until August 28, 1795. After many hard struggles it was dedicated May 15, 1796. Eighteen Annual Conferences have been held in Lynn, and, excepting that of 1873, held in Saint Paul's, all were held in the First Church.

Mr. Johnson's house, on the corner of Market and Essex Streets, was demolished in the spring of 1847. The first chapel, into which they moved from the barn adjoining this house, was succeeded by the "Lynn Common Church," now "Lee Hall." It was abandoned for the present First Church, Lynn, which was dedicated in February, 1879, and is an honor to the city, the proud old mother of nine Methodist churches in the "City of Shoes." Jesse Lee and his host are fittingly commemorated by tablets in the church, cut from fine Carrara marble.

The first Conference in New England

was held in Lynn chapel, and began August 2, 1792. How glad Asbury and they all felt to have a chapel of their own to meet in! Asbury writes that they had "the outside of the house completed." The venerable Asbury is surrounded by eight itinerants. Close to him sat Pioneer Jesse Lee. Near him was Hope Hull, "the Summerfield of New England," "attractive with the beauty of talent and holiness." Menzies Raynor, from the Hartford Circuit, was there. Close to him was John Allen, the Boanerges from Needham Circuit. We are not sure that Jeremiah Cosden and Lemuel Smith were there. The Conference began on Thursday and closed with a red-hot revival meeting on Sunday evening. The bishop preached in the forenoon and Salem Allen in the afternoon. Eight preachers were stationed at this Conference. We would like to have seen them set out from Lynn on that Monday morning for their fields. We would especially like to have been Jesse Lee's traveling companion, a year later, when from the same place he set out to open new fields in Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire, but we were not then able to "move on" with him.

When in Lynn, Lee was accustomed fre-

quently to visit the schools and talk with the children. One day he wrote for a girl, recently converted, the following lines:

> As Sally is my given name,
> And happiness is still my aim,
> I now resolve, live where I may,
> I'll ever strive to watch and pray.

This piece of paper, treasured with great care, was presented by that girl, then Mrs. Sally Mansfield, aged nearly eighty years, to the pastor of the South Street Methodist Episcopal Church, Lynn, Rev. Dr. Daniel Steele, in 1854, by whom it was presented to the New England Methodist Historical Society.

In Boston it was hard to procure a place to preach in, and the Word took but little hold on the minds of the hearers, but as soon as Lee began to preach in Lynn the Word had a powerful effect on the hearers, who flocked to hear by hundreds. It soon appeared that Lynn was the place that should be attended to, in preference to any other.

The society in Lynn determined on building a Methodist meetinghouse, which they began on the 14th of June, raised on the 21st, and dedicated on the 26th, 1791. This was the first regular permanent society that

was formed in the State of Massachusetts, and the first meetinghouse that was ever built for the Methodists in the State. From that time religion continued to prosper in Lynn for many months without declension.

It was well that Benjamin Johnson invited Jesse Lee to Lynn. In 1791 "Boston" Station was changed to "Lynn" Station in the Minutes.

CHAPTER XII

PIONEERING IN MAINE

THE second Conference in New England also was held in Lynn. Asbury reached Lynn on Monday, July 29, 1793. The Conference closed Sunday, August 4. An original copy of the Minutes of 1793, now before me, reads: "100," the number of the station, "Province of Maine and Lynn, Jesse Lee." "Ezekiel Cooper, Elder," is in the margin. For some reason Lee did not hasten to Maine. It is said that he was so attached to Lynn that he hated to leave it, to rough it again, and that his friends had to urge him to set out. September 10 finds him preaching the first Methodist sermon in the province, at Saco. By the end of the year he had visited Castine, the upper settlements of the Penobscot River near Old Town, Twenty-five-Mile Pond, up Sandy River, back to Hallowell, thence to Portland. He made his own appointments and preached almost every day. He formed the Readfield Circuit, which extended from Hallowell to Sandy River, and was two

hundred miles from any other circuit. The first sermons preached on the circuit were: October 13, in Hallowell; 15th, Farmington; 17th, Sandy River; 17th, New Sharon; 18th, Mount Vernon; 19th, Readfield; 21st, Winthrop; 22d, Monmouth.

In 1794 we trace his steps to Sydney, Fayette, Livermore, Wayne, Chesterville, Jay, Vassalborough, Harlem, Winslow, Norridgewock, Canaan, Clinton, Fairfield, Green, New Vineyard, Strong, Avon, Leeds, Lewistown, Starks, and Anson, where we find him on December 4. He formed the first class meeting in Maine in Monmouth, "about the first of November, 1794; the second at Readfield, a short time after." The first meetinghouse was built at Readfield, and was covered in in December, 1794; the second in Monmouth, in 1795. The first two sacramental services in the province were at Readfield, December 14, 1794, and at Monmouth, on Christmas Day, 1794.

On August 29, 1798, the first Conference in Maine was held in Readfield. Ten traveling preachers and about two hundred communicants were present. The Portland Circuit, formed early in 1795, was the second in Maine. Here was preached the first

Methodist sermon, September 12, 1793, and the first class formed, October, 1795. The Penobscot was the third circuit in Maine. It included both sides of the Penobscot River. A great revival broke out on this circuit in the summer of 1797, in which sinners were struck helpless to the floor and Christians lost their strength. Bath Circuit was formed in 1796. Bath did not at first yield to Methodism, which was introduced there September 15, 1793. Disputes about the settled minister were the cause. In Union, the other part of the circuit, religion prospered from the beginning. Thomaston did not take kindly to Methodism at the first. Kennebeck Circuit was organized in 1796, and Pleasant River in 1797. These were later called Norridgewock and Union River Circuits. Bethel Circuit was formed in 1800, with great difficulty and hardships.

At the Conferences of 1794 and 1795 Mr. Lee was appointed elder of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine. In 1795 he crossed the border line and entered New Brunswick. At the General Conference of October, 1796, Conference boundaries were made. The whole work was divided into six Conferences.

CHAPTER XIII

ALMOST A BISHOP

With New England added to the Middle and South Atlantic States, the work had become too great for the superintendence of Bishop Asbury, who, because of the frequent absences from the States of Dr. Coke, was much of the time alone. He appealed for help. At the General Conference in Baltimore, October 20, 1796, it was moved "to strengthen the episcopacy in a way which should be agreeable to Mr. Asbury." Mr. Lee saw that this was giving too much power to one man, and believed it to be the business of the General Conference to elect helpers for Asbury. Lee was outvoted, but Dr. Coke promising to remain in the country the matter dropped. Dr. Coke did not stay in America long, and the need of help grew greater. Asbury had known and watched Lee from the beginning. His work in New England delighted him. He wanted Lee for his assistant.

The year 1797 was so strenuous for As-

bury that on September 12 he wrote Lee asking him to attend the Conference at Wilbraham, Massachusetts, for him, then, to go on to Georgia, Holston, and Kentucky —in fact, to assist him anywhere he might need him. Asbury's plan was to have the Wilbraham Conference elect three assistant bishops. His chosen ones were Whatcoat, Poythress, and Lee. He told Lee that his brethren in Virginia wanted him to assist him. The assistants were to be ordained. Had this carried, the office of assistant bishop would have been created. Lee presided at Wilbraham with great acceptance to the preachers. He then joined Asbury at New Rochelle, New York, and they went on to the Philadelphia Conference, which unanimously voted that Lee assist Asbury. They then both went South.

In November Dr. Coke, who meanwhile had returned to England, suddenly reappeared in America. Asbury and Lee met him November 17, riding a small horse, with a boy behind him. Coke had come from England with the request that he be released from all work in America. They agreed to meet at the Conference, November 25. This Conference voted Asbury a rest until the Conference at Charleston,

January 1, 1798, and that Lee should meanwhile fill Asbury's appointments. This meant for Lee nearly five hundred miles to travel and twenty-five appointments to fill on the journey, and all within a little more than four weeks. At Charleston he was delighted with the progress made during the thirteen years of his absence. He remained in the South assisting Asbury until April, when he started for New England. His brother John went with him as far as New York, where they parted, to meet no more on earth.

July 20 finds Lee again in New London, Connecticut; August 28, at Readfield, Maine; September 19, at the Conference in Granville, Massachusetts. From this Conference he again goes South with Asbury. They reached the Hudson, seven miles above New York, September 28; then on to Burlington, New Jersey, to Maryland, the Carolinas, and Georgia.

The year 1799 was spent assisting Asbury, doing all the work of a bishop except ordaining and fixing the appointments. They spent most of the year in the Southland. For three years Lee had been assisting Asbury, with acceptance to the preachers. The General Conference was to meet

at Baltimore in May, 1800. Mr. Lee naturally expected there to be elected to the office of bishop; he never called it an "order." He had had a good training for this office, and Asbury wanted him to be elected. At the Virginia Conference, in April, Lee noticed that one tried hard to keep the preachers from going to General Conference. Who that "certain person" was he does not say, nor does he name the one who, at the next Conference he met, tried to have the preachers attend. Evidently ecclesiastical politics was suspected. Asbury must now have help or resign. The Conference voted to elect a bishop. The choice was between Richard Whatcoat and Jesse Lee. Whatcoat had been sent to America with Coke in 1784. He was older and had been longer in the ministry than Lee. He was in every way worthy of the office. On the first ballot there was no choice; the second was a tie; on the third ballot Whatcoat, by a majority of four votes, was elected bishop. Doubtless a false report that Lee had imposed his services on Asbury for eighteen months past, which Asbury denied, and which was traced to "T—— L——, and he did not clear himself," cost Lee votes. Probably

some thought Lee too witty to be a bishop. When told of this Lee said, "It would be *unnatural* to assume the gravity of the office previous to receiving it; put me in it, and I will sustain its dignity."

Of course, Mr. Lee was disappointed, but he was not soured. On the day of Whatcoat's ordination Lee preached in the Market House. He says: "The power of the Lord came down among us while I was preaching, and the people wept and roared aloud, and prayed most earnestly." Seven souls were won at that service. Asbury was disappointed. He asked Lee to assist the bishops, who could not do all the work, and told him that if he would not consent he (Asbury) would be forced to resign the bishopric at the close of the Conference. At the Conference in New York, June 21, Lee writes:

"We sat in Conference again, and the bishop put a few lines privately into my hand, which I here transcribe verbatim:

"Jesse Lee is appointed to act as an assistant to the bishops at the yearly Conferences, and to aid the book interest in every part of the continent where he goes.

"DEAR BROTHER: We wish to close the minutes in York, if we can; you must have some place

therein: will the above do? York will be a blank at present; if you choose to stay until you think it meet to go down South, you may; and more, you may make your own appointments South, and omit going eastward, or go if you choose to the East, or if you choose you may come to Kentucky.

"FRANCIS ASBURY,
"RICHARD WHATCOAT.

"Saturday morning.

"I then wrote them a few lines, and informed them that I did not feel at liberty to take the appointment, or to travel at large, but if I had any choice it was, after making a visit to the East, to take a single circuit."

The bishops' offer shows the esteem they had for him, and their confidence in his ability and loyalty. The rest of that year, June to December, 1800, he spent touring in New England, once going over into Canada, preaching the gospel and saving souls, though not elected to the episcopacy.

CHAPTER XIV

NEW ENGLAND REVISITED

THE first year of his absence from New England, 1801, was begun in New York. In March he was appointed presiding elder of the South District of Virginia. This was not his choice. He preferred a circuit. He mourns that only several dozens had been converted on the district that year. He was reappointed in March, 1802. The quarterly meetings that year were marked by revivals. He was continued on the district in 1803, the year when camp meetings were adopted by Methodists, after the example of the Presbyterians, among whom they originated. At Lee's first camp meeting about three thousand were present. Twenty-nine Methodist preachers were there, and about thirty-five souls were converted. Camp meetings appealed to Jesse Lee.

In 1804 he returned to circuit work at Williamsburg. He attended General Conference at Baltimore this year, and also began to write the life of his brother. In 1805 he was appointed to the Mecklenburg

Circuit. The next year finds him on the Amelia Circuit. His journals show a very busy year, and some peculiar cases of conversion. In 1807 he was given a roving commission. He went South to Georgia, preaching as he went. In April we find him among the ruins of Whitefield's orphan-house, in Savannah. He had not seen it for seven years. He considered that many thousands of dollars had been wasted there, and that Whitefield did not do wisely in leaving that institution to Lady Huntingdon. He left Georgia on December 4, and reëntered South Carolina, stopping at Columbia with Brother Harrison. Conference met at Charleston, December 28.

On January 4, 1808, he set out for Virginia. He reached the Conference at Lynchburg, February 1. Here he was appointed to Cumberland Circuit, Virginia, where he labored until April 3, when he went to the General Conference at Baltimore. He now began to work in earnest on his History of Methodism. After General Conference, which closed May 26, he, on May 31, left Baltimore for his long-contemplated second visit to New England. If this were a book instead of a booklet, we could picture his almost daily doings dur-

ing this, to him, delightful visit to the scenes of his pioneering travels in New England. We must be content with simply naming places visited, in the order laid down in his journals. He started from Baltimore, May 31, 1808, and got back to his relatives in Petersburg, December 9, after an absence from them of about eight months.

From Baltimore he went through New Jersey to New York, which he reached June 19. As he went he preached. He visited a camp meeting at Penn's Neck, and disapproved the ceremonies he found there. He would not march around with them at the closing services. He preached at Mount Holly, New Mills, Allentown, New Brunswick, and Newark, in New Jersey. He spent seven days in New York city, where he preached nine sermons. He then went to camp meeting at Cow-Harbour, where he took a sloop, crossed the Sound, and landed in New England again at Norwich, Connecticut. Nearly twenty years before this he first entered New England friendless, and to endure hardships; now he receives a royal welcome, almost an ovation, wherever he goes. Seven days are spent in Connecticut, at Norwich Stratfield,

Stratford, New Haven, New London, then back to Norwich.

On Saturday, July 9, he enters Rhode Island. Cranston, Providence, Bristol, Newport, and Portsmouth are visited. At Newport he is shocked to see a Methodist meetinghouse with a steeple, a bell, and large square pews, and male and female worshipers sitting together. "Is not this a violation of Methodist rules?" he asks.

On Thursday, July 21, he reached Boston. The next day he preached in the "new meetinghouse" on Bromfield Street, of which he says: "It has an altar round the pulpit, in a half circle, and the house is fixed with long pews of a circular form, to be uniform with the altar. The front of the gallery is of the same form. It looks very handsome, and will contain an abundance of people, but it is not on the Methodist plan, for the pews are sold to the highest bidder." On Saturday afternoon he went to Lynn. John Broadhead entertained him. He preached to his old friends on Sunday. They wept together as they talked of his first visit to Lynn; they were tears of joy. "I have not been so well pleased for a long time, at meeting my old friends, as I was at this place," Lee writes.

On July 29 he sets out from Lynn to revisit Maine, via Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where he preaches in a steepled, belled, and pewed Universalist meeting-house which the Methodists are about to buy. July 30 finds him again in the Province of Maine. York, Kennebeck, Gloucester, Monmouth, Winthrop, Lincolnville, Orrington, and Hampden are visited in order. Here he was a thousand miles from home, toward which he now turns, on August 22. On his return journey he visits Twenty-five-Mile Pond, in Unity, Fairfield, and Farmington. Here fifteen years before, he was the first Methodist they had seen; now (in 1808) he finds nine local preachers here and meets about a hundred at the Communion services. Vienna, Strong, Jay, Livermore, Readfield, Durham, Portland, and Scarborough are visited in order. He spent forty-three days in Maine, where he preached forty-seven sermons and "had seen very few dry or barren meetings. The visit was the most profitable and pleasing of any I had ever made in that part of the world," he writes.

Five days are now spent in New Hampshire, at Poplin, Sandown, and Plastow, where he preached the last of his seven

sermons in that State. On Wednesday, September 14, he is back in Lynn. From Friday, 16th, until the 19th, he preached and visited in Boston, then on to Waltham, Ware, and Wilbraham. Sunday, 25th, he is in Hartford, preaching in the old playhouse. After six days in Connecticut he leaves New England forever, on Friday, September 30, 1808. Passing through New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, where he visited Congress for a few days, he reached home and friends in Petersburg, December 9. This whole trip was a great joy to him and was fraught with blessings to his old New England friends, and to many others who were converted and edified by his sermons.

CHAPTER XV

CIRCUIT PREACHER AND GENERAL CONFERENCE DELEGATE

When an English Wesleyan Methodist preacher retires he is said to "sit down." On his return from New England to his native country Jesse Lee began to prepare to "sit down" by buying an estate near his father's house. He had been twenty-six years in the itinerancy. These had been years of incessant travel and toil, and of much privation. They were relieved by occasional visits to his father's house, which shows him to have been quite a "home body," though a bachelor. On one of these visits he had the singular experience of baptizing his youngest half-sister, only a few months old, in the presence of his eldest sister, then fifty-five years old, and of his father, then seventy-five years old, and his third wife, the mother of the child.

Early in 1809 Jesse Lee bought a farm for four hundred and fifty dollars. He could only pay down two hundred dollars in cash, and promise to pay the remainder in

four years. Though he had been the means of making many rich toward God, he was himself poor in this world's goods, but he hoped to end his days there in quiet, but not yet. In February he went to the Conference in Tarborough, North Carolina, and was appointed to the Brunswick Circuit, in Virginia, to which he at once went. In 1810 he was made presiding elder of the Meharrin District. In 1811 he took the Amelia Circuit and also labored on the Petersburg Station. The year 1812 finds him in Richmond Station; 1813, on the Brunswick Circuit again; 1814, on the Cumberland and Manchester Circuit.

At Richmond, in summer, he constantly preached four times on each Sabbath, at least once in the open air. A hearer says of his preaching at that time: "When Mr. Lee commences his sermon it always reminds me of the hoisting of the flood gate of a mill; there is one incessant pouring of the sweetest eloquence I ever heard from any man in my life." He preached at the Virginia Conference in Newburn, North Carolina, in 1813, from the text, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also" (Acts 17. 6). His three propositions were: "I. That when

God made the world he placed it right side up. II. That by the introduction of sin it had been 'turned upside down.' And, III. It is the business of the ministry to turn it back again to its original position." The interest in that sermon was seen next morning, when in all parts of the town things were turned upside down. Carriages and other vehicles were bottom up; boats were lying on land, keel up; small houses, signs, boxes, gates, all out of fix. When the doers were reproved they said, "Didn't the preacher say they were the men that 'turned the world upside down,' and had they not come here to put the town 'right side up'?"

His tact in handling men is seen in an event of September, 1812. Many sailors were driven to the coast to escape English cruisers during the war. Among these was a Captain Swift, who with his drunken sailors went to a camp ground near James River, below Richmond. They were bent on a row with the preachers, who had gone to bed. Jesse Lee awoke some preachers and went out among the sailors, and up into the preachers' stand, and told the sailors if they would come near they should have a sermon. Lee set the Rev. P. Courtenay to

preach. His text was, "At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises to God." The weird lights, the hush of night, and the voice of the preacher, aided by the ardent spirits within them, put the sailors to sleep. When all slept Mr. Lee pulled the preacher's coat tails, and said, "Stop; let's go to bed." The sailors woke in the morning stiff with cold and full of chagrin; they escaped before the time for morning service.

The first delegated General Conference met in 1812. It was composed of two bishops and ninety delegates. It represented the eight Conferences then existing. Conferences were appointed both as to time, place, and territory by the bishops alone until 1796. Then the work was divided into six Conferences, and provision was made for one in Maine, if necessary. Independent rights were then granted to each Conference. In 1800 the New York Conference was made of portions of the New England and Philadelphia Conferences. In 1809 Genesee Conference was added, making the eight represented at the General Conference in 1812.

The General Conferences before this date were made up of all preachers who wished to attend. Jesse Lee led the delegation of

eleven from the Virginia Conference. In 1808 he had seven votes for bishop, Ezekiel Cooper twenty-eight, and William McKendree ninety-five. Lee's friends thought he had a good prospect of election in 1812. Both Bishops Asbury and McKendree desired more bishops should be elected to help them, but the committee, who it is thought feared Lee would be chosen, reported unadvisable to elect any. Ezekiel Cooper and Early tried to amend the report, but did not succeed. No bishops were elected. This was his last General Conference as delegate. He was an interested visitor in 1816. His biographers think his political opponents prevented his election that year.

Mr. Lee was a zealous advocate of the election of presiding elders by their brethren. This question stirred the Church from 1800 to 1828, when it was sidetracked by other questions, but it has never been permanently downed. Asbury was strongly opposed to it. He once turned his back toward the debaters. When Lee rose to answer his opponent he said: "Mr. President, Brother —— has said that no man of common sense would have used such arguments as I did. I am therefore, Mr. President, compelled to believe the brother thinks

me a man of *uncommon* sense." "Yes, yes, Brother Lee," said Bishop Asbury, turning half around in his chair, "yes, yes, Brother Lee, you are a man of uncommon sense." "Then, sir," said Mr. Lee, very quickly and pleasantly, "then I beg that uncommon attention may be paid to what I am about to say." But the bishop resumed his face-to-the-wall position, and amid a general smile Mr. Lee proceeded with his remarks.

Mr. Lee opposed admitting local deacons to elder orders. In the debate the Rev. Asa Shinn reminded Lee that an elder should "rule well his own family," and that he, Lee, had promised to do this, but, being a bachelor, he had no family to rule. This shot at Lee's single blessedness evoked a laugh at Lee's expense, but he himself seemed greatly to enjoy the joke. Mr. Lee was the author of the third Restrictive Rule. He proved himself a great legislator at Conference as well as pioneer on the field.

We must not omit the fact that our hero at least once showed that he was of the earth. In 1815 he certainly did refuse to go to his appointment. That he was afterward sorry for this shows that he was not altogether blameless. To his surprise his

name was not read off at the Virginia Conference in Lynchburg, in February, 1815. A footnote said, "Jesse Lee will receive his appointment at the Baltimore Conference." Lee asked, "Is that right?" He was transferred without his consent and later appointed at Fredericksburg. He never went. Leroy M. Lee writes up the details of this, on page 490. Jesse Lee thought his sudden transfer was brought about to prevent his election to the General Conference of 1816. If so, it succeeded. As we read such things we conclude that ecclesiastical politics is not a new science, and we are sure it is not from above, but is earthly, sensual, and devilish, and that the sooner it is driven down to its own place the better for the Church, and for the world which the Church is sent to save.

CHAPTER XVI

AUTHOR, AND CHAPLAIN TO CONGRESS

In 1805 Mr. Lee entered the field of authorship by writing the life of his brother, the Rev. John Lee. He was twelve years younger than Jesse, having been born March 12, 1770. He was converted July 13, 1787, in his eighteenth year. In September, 1788, he became a traveling preacher, under his brother's care, on the Flanders Circuit. In 1789 we find him again with his brother in Connecticut, helping in the well-begun work in New England. After a faithful and successful ministry he died October 6, 1801. The details of his death show his unfaltering trust and readiness to depart. Bishops Whatcoat and Asbury preached funeral sermons for him. His brother Jesse wrote his life, but did not publish it until 1805. It is a small book, of only 180 pages, and of the size of an early Discipline, but it seems to have taken the author from the spring until the autumn to get it through the press. As most of it is extracts from his brother's journals, the

personal pronoun "I" often occurs. The printer does not seem to have been overstocked with that letter. The author dryly remarked in the office, one day, that he had "put out all the printer's I's." To spend nearly four years writing this little book, and about nine months getting it through the press, indicates the slow processes of those days. This work did not make Jesse Lee famous as an author.

His next book, though unappreciated by his brethren, has put every historian of American Methodism under lasting obligations to him. Its title is, A Short History of the Methodists. A small book of 366 pages, it is now exceedingly scarce. It was published in Baltimore in 1810. This book made him the first American Methodist historian. What it lacks in literary style and quality is more than made up in the facts which he has accumulated and placed in order. We know of no other in that day, save, perhaps, Bishop Asbury, who was too busy making history, who could have written such a history of Methodism in America.

His third and last work as author was in 1814, when he wrote and published two sermons—one a funeral sermon on the death

of Miss Hardy, of Bertie, North Carolina; the other on the duty of Christian watchfulness. Both are said to be good, "the latter excellent—replete with sound views of the subject, exhibiting a clear perception of religious experience, and abounding in just and solid admonitions as to the importance of the duty, and the great danger of neglecting to 'watch in all things'." This was a favorite subject of the author, and he wrote out of his own experience.

In May, 1809, Mr. Lee went from his Brunswick Circuit, Virginia, where he had been since February, to Baltimore, in order to get his history through the press. An emergency session of Congress being called, at Washington, Mr. Lee went there. He arrived May 20, two days before Congress met. Although he seems to have had no idea of doing so on leaving his circuit, he became a candidate for chaplain to the House of Representatives. He was elected on the second ballot on Saturday, and began his work on Monday, May 29, 1809. This was the spirit in which he entered upon that high office, for the first time held by a Methodist: "I believe my intention was pure in offering for this place; and I must do the best I can while I am in this office.

I expect some good will be done directly or remotely. I wish to leave all to God. O Lord, thou knowest my heart, thou knowest that I desire to please thee, but unless thou wilt stand by me I shall labor in vain." His success in this high office is seen in the fact that he was reëlected to it five times, once in December, 1812, when he was not a candidate. Then, in December, 1814, he was elected chaplain to the United States Senate, making seven elections to the Congresses from May 27, 1809, to December, 1814.

It seems strange to us of these later days to find Mr. Lee severely criticised and even denounced by his ministerial brethren for taking this office. True, it took him from circuit work, and from district work when he was presiding elder, but others could do such work during his absence on duty at Congress. At the last attack made upon him in Conference his opponent was the brilliant young Rev. C. Hines, but Mr. Lee's ready wit enabled him to silence his eloquent opponent. Hines's oratory on this occastion was in imitation of the French court. He kept on addressing Mr. Lee as "Sire," "excellent Sire," "venerable Sire," etc. Mr. Lee utterly confounded the young man who was

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thus spraying the Conference with his oratory at the expense of Mr. Lee, who arose and said, "Bishop, I wish you'd make that young brother quit calling me an old horse!" The Conference roared with laughter, and the young orator folded his soaring wings and dropped into silence. No more objections were made in Conferences to Mr. Lee's chaplaincy.

Mr. Lee did not enjoy the company of his congressional constituency as he did that of his circuits. Especially offensive were the swearers. Once he very skillfully rebuked such. He and some congressmen were returning to Virginia by stage. The stage got so stuck in the mud that all had to get out, and pry it out. When they came to reënter for the journey Lee was missing. They thought his two hundred and fifty pounds were still stuck in the mud. When he appeared they joked him about deserting them in their distress. He replied, "Ah, gentlemen, I intended to help you, but some of you swore so hard I went out behind a tree and prayed for you." There was less swearing on the rest of that journey.

CHAPTER XVII

FROM LABOR TO REWARD

On the fortieth anniversary of his birthday he records: "However strange it may appear, so it is, that I have thought that I should live till I was about fifty-six years old." He did live to be fifty-eight years and six months old. All through his life he had been blessed generally with good health, until the year 1815, when we find him ailing. In January, 1816, he went to the Virginia Conference at Raleigh, though determined to take his appointment from Baltimore Conference, to which he had been involuntarily transferred the year before. Before going thither he was very careful to arrange all his business in Virginia as though he never expected to return. His friends later thought he must have been so impressed. He never returned. Baltimore Conference adjourned March 15. He was appointed to the city of Annapolis, Maryland, and reached his station on the 27th.

On March 31 his old friend Bishop Asbury died, in the seventy-second year of

his age and the forty-ninth year of his ministry. Mr. Lee paid a high tribute to the character and worth of his old friend. The General Conference met that year in Baltimore. Bishop Asbury's remains were then reinterred in Eutaw Street Church, under the pulpit. Jesse Lee and Minton Thrift, his biographer, walked together in the procession of one hundred and fifty ministers, as mourners, on that occasion. Mr. Lee was deeply moved, though he did not know that in about six months he would his body with his charge lay down and cease at once to work and live.

He went back to his charge at Annapolis in May. His first sermon on going to this charge was from Josh. 5. 14: "As captain of the host of the Lord, am I now come." His last sermon to them was from 1 Cor. 15. 33, preached on the day of the last entry in his journals, August 15, 1816. He then went to camp meeting, near Hillsborough, where on Thursday, the 22d, he preached from 1 Pet. 2. 5. On Saturday, the 24th, at three o'clock, he preached his last sermon. His text was his favorite, "But grow in grace." A chill and high fever seized him soon after this sermon. His public work was now done.

Minton Thrift shall tell us the story of the end of the earthly life of this man of God:

"On Saturday [Sunday], the 25th, he was removed to Hillsborough to the house of Brother Sellers, where every attention, by physicians and friends, was given; but neither medical skill nor the soothing hand of friendship could arrest the progress of his disease.

"Through the first part of his illness his mind was much weighed down, so that he spoke but little. These were, no doubt, the last struggles with the grand adversary, and the sequel will show the triumphant manner in which he was put to flight; for, on Tuesday night, September the 10th, he broke out in ecstasies of joy; also, on Wednesday, 11th, about nine o'clock A. M., his soul was so overwhelmed with the love of God that he was constrained to cry out, 'Glory! glory! glory! hallelujah! Jesus reigns.' On the evening of the same day he spoke nearly twenty minutes deliberately and distinctly; among other things, he directed one present [the Rev. Henry Boehm], who affectionately attended him in his illness, to write to his brother, and inform him that he died happy in the Lord;

and was fully satisfied with Brother Sellers's conduct toward him. 'Give my respects to Bishop McKendree,' said he, 'and tell him that I die in love with all the preachers; that I love him, and that he lives in my heart.' Then he took leave of all present, six or seven in number, and requested them to pray. After this he spoke but little; his work was done, and he was in waiting for the summons of his Master.

"Thursday, the 12th. In the early part of the day he lost his speech, but appeared still to retain his reason. Thus he continued to linger till the same evening about half past seven o'clock, when, without a sigh or groan, he expired, with his eyes seemingly fixed on his great recompense of reward. Such was the earthly end of this faithful servant of Christ. 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?'" He continues:

"Thus ended the labors and sufferings of this man of God, aged fifty-eight years and six months; and though he left no disconsolate widow or fatherless orphan to shed the tear of sorrow upon his bier, or strew his grave with flowers, yet he lives in the affections of thousands who knew him, and

who were endeared to him by the strong ties of Christian love and brotherly affection."

Such is Minton Thrift's account of the departure of this faithful servant of God as he went into the immediate presence of his Master, to hear him pronounce over him, "Well done." Surely Jesse Lee, the Apostle of New England Methodism, could say, with the greatest of the apostles, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith."

The tabernacle which Jesse Lee put off was solemnly laid in the old Methodist burying ground on South Light Street, in Baltimore. Over his grave was placed a plain marble slab inscribed:

In Memory of
THE REV. JESSE LEE.
Born in Prince George County, Va., 1758;
Entered the Itinerant Ministry of the M. E. Church, 1783; and
Departed this life September, 1816,
Aged 58 years.
A man of ardent zeal and great ability as a minister of Christ
His labors were abundantly owned of God,
Especially in the New England States, in which he was truly
The Apostle of American Methodism.

After lying there until 1873, Jesse Lee's body, with those of about seven thousand others, mostly Methodists, was removed to the then new Mount Olivet Cemetery. We once made a pilgrimage to that beautiful

city of the dead, where one said, there are "thirty-three acres of Methodists." We found it about two miles from the city of Baltimore, on the north side of the Frederick or Catonsville road. In the Preachers' Lot we found many historic and honored names. In our mind's eye is now seen the granite shaft, raised by New Englanders, which reads on one side:

JESSE LEE,
Apostle of Methodism
to New England.

And on the other side:

New England Methodism
Erects this Tribute
to the Memory of
REV. JESSE LEE,
on the eighty-sixth anniversary of
his first sermon in Boston,
preached under the Old Elm
on the Common, July 11th, 1790.

Thus indissolubly is New England linked with Baltimore Methodism, and the Methodism of the North is under everlasting obligation to the Methodism of the South for this great gift to them of Jesse Lee.

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